

KARL KEATING

Catholicism

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FUNDAMENTALISM

The Attack
ON “ROMANISM”

BY

“BIBLE CHRISTIANS”

IGNATIUS

Catholicism and Fundamentalism

The Attack on “Romanism”

by “Bible Christians”

Karl Keating

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and
Fundamentalism

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Do not be afraid, speak out, and refuse to be silenced; I am with thee, and none shall come near to do thee harm; I have a great following in this city.

(Acts 18:9-10)

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Preface

Few orthodox Catholics can imagine themselves leaving their religion for another. If, in the disorientation that comes between sleep and wakefulness, they imagine changing their spiritual allegiance, they see themselves waving a fond farewell to Rome (“Well, it was almost what we were looking for”) and walking but a short distance to something Romelike.

They may see themselves turning to Eastern Orthodoxy, perceived as a haven from modern religious travails, or to Anglo-Catholicism, still a lure for the romantic and for readers of Pusey, Keble, and the early Newman. Or they may see themselves withdrawing from the active practice of religion, remaining “culturally Catholic,” honoring the faith of their upbringing in the breach and the perhaps twice-yearly observance (to placate spouse and children). To convert to mainline Protestantism, or to collapse into agnosticism, does not occur to them even in nightmares, and outright atheism is for crackpots and sour old men. They can contemplate only a slight shift—that, or a life of undistinguished lapsarianism.

What few practicing Catholics can imagine is that they might chuck Catholicism for something like fundamentalism, to which they are not drawn at all. Still, they know that people of their acquaintance, people from their own parishes, have made the transition, and are seemingly none the worse for wear. These former Catholics function the same way on the job, cavort with their children at the same parks, and shop at the same malls. They seem largely unchanged by their newfound faith.

Despite that, their conversion is taken as a betrayal because it is a denial. A change to Eastern Orthodoxy or Anglo-Catholicism is more an adjustment than a real switch; even becoming a lapsed Catholic makes sense, since it is a matter of letting spiritual indolence take control. But fundamentalism? To embrace it is to reject Catholicism outright, because fundamentalism does not just modify, but discards, the sacramental and liturgical core of Catholicism. One might as well subscribe to an obscure Eastern cult. To most Catholics, that would be just as sensible.

This lack of sympathy with the bare possibility of conversion to

fundamentalism may be one reason the fundamentalist problem is misunderstood by Catholics. After all, it is hard to understand something that is not taken seriously. But the allure of fundamentalism *should* be taken seriously, if for no other reason than that hundreds of thousands of Catholics have taken it so seriously in the last few years that they have joined “Bible-believing” churches. Many of them have become not just non-Catholics, but anti-Catholics, because such an attitude is the natural result of the logic of their position. They perceive a duty to bring into “real Christianity” the family and friends they left at Mass, and bring them in they have. In this they have not been left to their own devices. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals work to introduce Catholics to fundamentalism, and each year they distribute millions of books, tracts, and recordings. They have been remarkably successful, and their techniques and arguments are worth examining.

First, though, a few words about what not to expect. What follows will be no thorough review of fundamentalism as a whole and still less of Protestantism. The focus is on that part of fundamentalism actively engaged in anti-Catholic work and on the issues brought up in that work. Just as fundamentalists form a subset of all Protestants, so actively anti-Catholic fundamentalists are a subset of all fundamentalists. It is the tireless workers in the anti-Catholic fields who are profiled here, and even then there is room to consider only representatives of the movement and only some of their charges.

Do not expect this book to discuss what it is not meant to discuss. (There is little more frustrating for a writer than to be accused of badly handling a topic he had no intention of discussing anyway.) The focus is on those fundamentalists, whether blessed with notoriety or with anonymity, who try to convince Catholics to forsake Rome and on the arguments they make against Catholicism. Many of the best-known fundamentalists do not fall within this purview because they act irenically, making common cause with Catholics on social and political matters and never using terms such as “papist”, or “Romish”, or “Jesuitical”—terms that are giveaways for active anti-Catholics.

Keep in mind that when we try to locate fundamentalism on the religious spectrum, we run into all sorts of terminological confusions. What popularly goes by the name may be considered one wing of evangelicalism. In fact, the theology attributed to fundamentalists in this book can be attributed to many

self-described evangelicals who are put off by fundamentalism's reaction to the Catholic Church. It is easy to find people who call themselves evangelicals, who disdain fundamentalists, who are reasonably friendly with Catholics (even allowing us the title Christian), yet whose theological beliefs are indistinguishable from those of strict fundamentalists. Millions who shun the label are theologically fundamentalists.

For convenience—or out of discomfort in being bracketed with people who get a bad press—they choose a looser label. And loose it is. Evangelicalism is a spectrum. At one end it merges, even coincides, with strict fundamentalism; at the other it fades into mainline Protestantism, which is to say, religious liberalism. It is a matter of convenience that the term fundamentalist is used in these pages. There appears to be no adequate alternative. “Evangelical” is too broad; “conservative evangelical” is too awkward; “Bible Christian” implies that no other Christians base their faith on the Bible.

In covering anti-Catholic activity among fundamentalists, a writer cannot please everyone, Catholic or fundamentalist. Sometimes he cannot please anyone. Each reader will lament that something was left out, something was given too much attention, or something was given the wrong emphasis. “Why did he skip *the* one important point?” people will ask. “Why is *this* group omitted?”

The United States boasts (if that is the proper word) hundreds of anti-Catholic organizations. Only a few can be profiled here. Little-known organizations headed by little-known anti-Catholics have been given as much space as their well-known counterparts because most anti-Catholic groups are small, though their cumulative effect is large. Even then, it is not so much the groups that are examined as their arguments. The selection of arguments has not been entirely arbitrary, although it may appear so to the reader unable to find a consideration of the one that most interests him. Opponents of “Romanism” throw countless accusations against the Church. There is hardly space to list them all, let alone space to refute them. Far better, surely, to look at a sampling, stating the anti-Catholics' positions, so far as possible, in their own words and leaving room for what are intended to be adequate, although not complete, Catholic rejoinders.

The first part of this book deals with “professional anti-Catholics”, fundamentalists who earn their livelihoods by attacking the “Whore of Babylon”. In the second part representative issues are dissected. The final chapters give advice in practical apologetics (what to do, what not to do) and

in the intellectual preparation necessary for fruitful apologetics work.

Chapter 1

Background to Controversy

The story of fundamentalism may be viewed in three main phases.¹ The first lasted a generation, from the 1890s to the Scopes Trial of 1925. Fundamentalism emerged as a reaction to liberalizing trends in American Protestantism. Under a separatist impulse and influenced by millennialism and dispensationalism,² it broke off, but never completely, from evangelicalism, of which it may be considered one wing. In its second phase, after what many considered a crushing defeat at Dayton, Tennessee, it passed from view but never disappeared and never even lost ground. Finally, fundamentalism came to the nation's attention again a generation ago, and it has enjoyed remarkable growth since.

Not counting quasi-Christian sects such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, fundamentalism has experienced the greatest growth, in percentage terms, of any type of Christianity. Converts have included the previously unchurched and dropouts from other denominations. What has been surprising is that Catholics comprise a disproportionate share of the new recruits. The Catholic Church in America claims about a quarter of the country's inhabitants, so one might expect about a quarter of the converts to fundamentalism to have been Catholics at one time. Indeed, a reasonable expectation might be for an even smaller share, since people already in a church tend to remain through inertia, while the unchurched have fewer ties to keep them from conversion. Yet in many fundamentalist congregations a third, a half, or even a majority of the members once gave allegiance to Rome.³ This varies around the country, of course.

Fundamentalist churches in the South claim few converts from Catholicism because there never have been many Catholics there anyway. In parts of the Northeast and Midwest, where Catholics are more numerous, one finds former Catholics making up a majority of some fundamentalist congregations. In the Southwest, with a high Hispanic population, whole congregations consist of former Catholics. As many as one out of six

Hispanics in this country is now a fundamentalist. So great and so rapid has the exodus been that only twenty years ago one could find almost no Hispanic fundamentalists.

Although present-day fundamentalism is mainly American⁴ and is, as a movement within or alongside evangelicalism, rather new, many of its leaders speak as though it has been a well-formed, if often hidden, whole since the days of Christ. At the least, many people, both inside and outside fundamentalism, think it is unalloyed Reformation religion. This impression is bolstered by professional anti-Catholics, who speak and write like the Reformers they admire. They have steeped themselves in Calvin's *Institutes* or Luther's *Works*, and they use the diction of the sixteenth century. Writings of their opponents are called "epistles of straw" (Luther's label for the Epistle of James). They throw around the term "Antichrist" with abandon, as though it were a talisman. Whatever they dislike is "blasphemous", even if the matter at hand has nothing to do with blasphemy. And the histrionics of their pulpit orations give unhappy credence to stereotypes. (Yes, some fundamentalist preachers really do thump Bibles.)

Despite such appearances, fundamentalism's connection to the Reformation is not as clear as nonfundamentalists might think or as fundamentalists might hope. The direct historical link is not only obscure, but nearly absent. In recent years fundamentalism has received a considerable press, and people realize it is resurgent, but many also think it has been around for centuries and has only recently achieved notoriety. Not so.

True, there long have been people who have been, say, strict Calvinists, and fundamentalism is nothing if not Calvinistic. Yet until a lifetime ago fundamentalism as we know it was not a separate movement within Protestantism, and the word itself was unknown. People who today would be called fundamentalists were then just Baptists or Presbyterians or whatever; they did not perceive themselves as belonging to a religious faction within Protestantism, a faction that transcended denominational lines. In the last decade of the nineteenth century there arose issues that made them start to withdraw from mainline Protestantism, so that today, while their descendants may still be Baptists or Presbyterians or whatever, they are first fundamentalists, even if they shy away from that term and adopt one that has not been so abused by the secular media.

The issues that first divided fundamentalism from the remainder of Protestantism were the Social Gospel, a liberalizing and secularizing trend

within Protestantism; the embrace of Darwinism, which seemed to call into question the reliability of Scripture; and the higher criticism of the Bible that came out of Germany. New thinkers attempted to synthesize secularism and Christianity and did so by giving up Christianity, or so the conservatives thought. In reaction to these trends early fundamentalist leaders united around several basic principles, but it was not until the publication of the series of twelve volumes called *The Fundamentals*⁵ that the movement received its name.

The basic elements of fundamentalism were formulated almost exactly a century ago at the Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, by Benjamin B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, and their associates.⁶ What they produced became known as Princeton theology, and it appealed to conservative Protestants who were concerned with the Social Gospel movement.

Between 1909 and 1915 the brothers Milton and Lyman Stewart, whose wealth came from oil, underwrote *The Fundamentals*, a series of twelve paperback books. The preface to the volumes explained their purpose: “In 1909 God moved two Christian laymen to set aside a large sum of money [\$300,000] for issuing twelve volumes that would set forth the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and which were to be sent free to ministers of the gospel, missionaries, Sunday school superintendents, and others engaged in aggressive Christian work throughout the English-speaking world.” Three million copies were distributed. Each volume contained seven or eight essays. Aside from studies of strictly doctrinal matters, there were attacks on modern biblical criticism, critiques of scientific theories, personal testimonies, commentaries on missionary work and evangelization, and accounts of heresies. The last category included essays on “Catholicism: Is It Christian?” and “Rome, the Antagonist of the Nation”.⁷

There were sixty-four contributors, including scholars such as C. I. Scofield, compiler of the *Scofield Reference Bible*; “W. J. Eerdman and his son, Charles; H. C. G. Motile, Anglican bishop of Durham; James M. Gray, dean of the Moody Bible Institute; and Warfield himself. They included Presbyterian ministers, Methodist evangelists, editors of religious periodicals, professors, even an Egyptologist.⁸ As Edward Dobson, an associate pastor at Jerry Falwell’s Thomas Road Baptist Church, put it, “They were certainly not anti-intellectual, snakehandling, cultic, obscurantist fanatics.”⁹

The fundamentals identified in the series have been tallied variously, some

listing as many as fourteen points. Most commentators agree on at least these five: (1) the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture; (2) the deity of Christ, including his Virgin Birth; (3) the substitutionary atonement of his death; (4) his literal resurrection from the dead; and (5) his literal return in the Second Coming. Dobson writes, “Although some have expanded this list to include such issues as a literal heaven and hell, soulwinning, a personal Satan, and the local church, nevertheless the doctrinal character of fundamentalism still centers around the five fundamentals listed.”^{[10](#)}

The books were noticed by many who were unsympathetic to the views expressed in them. On May 22, 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick, himself a theological liberal, preached on the subject “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” He used the title of the books to designate the people he was opposing, and the label stuck. He was not, though, the coiner of the word. That honor goes to Curtis Lee Law, who, in an editorial for the *New York Watchman-Examiner* of July 1, 1920, defined “fundamentalists” as those “who mean to do battle for the fundamentals”.^{[11](#)}

This at least explains how the name of the movement came into being. The movement itself has a more confused origin. It had no one founder, nor was there a single event that precipitated its advent. Fundamentalist writers—especially those who write against the Catholic Church—insist that fundamentalism is nothing but a continuation of Christian orthodoxy, which prevailed for three centuries after Christ, went underground for twelve hundred years, surfaced with the Reformation, took its knocks from various sources, and was alternately influential and diminished in visibility. According to its partisans, fundamentalism is what remains after the rest of Christianity, if it can be granted the title, has fallen into apostasy.

The real history of fundamentalism is more prosaic. It is mainly an American phenomenon influenced by British evangelicalism, and it would be difficult to trace its antecedents beyond the Great Awakening of the 1720s, by the end of which, two decades later, perhaps a third of the adults in the Colonies had undergone a religious conversion. The Great Awakening might be credited with making the larger number of Americans consciously religious, and a widely spread religious sense meant a fertile ground for what would come to be called fundamentalism.

Most commentators look to the nineteenth century for fundamentalism’s origin. That century saw the steady dividing of American Protestantism, as first one disaffected group split from its denomination, then another. For

example, the Methodist revival of 1866, held on the centenary of the establishment of Methodism in America, culminated in the Holiness Camp Meeting of Vineland, New Jersey, a year later, and *that* culminated in schism, with the Holiness Churches splitting off from Methodism, which itself had split off from Anglicanism.

It was the nineteenth century that saw the rise of millennialism and dispensationalism, closely allied beliefs. The former refers to the literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth (see Rev 20) and is usually accompanied by a propensity for interpreting scriptural prophecies as referring to present or imminent historical events—in recent years, the Cold War and the status of Israel. The varieties of millennialism are numerous, there being no party line on the matter among fundamentalists. There is little agreement about when the Second Coming will occur—will it be before or after the millennium?—and less agreement on how to understand what many acknowledge to be predictions about the immediate future. A century ago, millennialism was chiefly known for the frequency with which its proponents gave precise, but unfailingly wrong, dates for the end of the world. Millennialists are more circumspect today.

Dispensationalism was a theory developed by John Nelson Darby (1800—1882), founder of the Plymouth Brethren. Darby divided history into dispensations, or eras, in which God dwells in different ways with different people. Dispensationalists distinguished between Israel and the Church—one God’s earthly people, the other his heavenly people. The distinctive phrase of their movement was “dividing the word of truth”. This referred to deciding which parts of the Bible refer to Israel and which to the Church.

The present era was considered the “time of the Gentiles”, in which Israel suffers as it awaits the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. These prophecies are to be fulfilled beginning at the Rapture, when the “saints” will be taken alive to heaven. The Rapture immediately precedes the Tribulation, which cleanses the world in anticipation of Christ’s reign. Darby’s writings influenced C. I. Scofield, and today many fundamentalists receive their instruction in dispensationalism from *The Scofield Reference Bible*.

Neither millennialism nor dispensationalism figures much in disputes between Catholics and fundamentalists, although many of the latter, along with many evangelicals, are preoccupied with such notions, as evidenced by the popularity of books such as Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*. Complaints about Catholicism seldom refer to peculiarly fundamentalist or

evangelical doctrines; the focus is almost always on peculiarly Catholic doctrines. For their part, Catholics take little interest in millennialism, although it intrigued their ancestors at the turn of the eleventh century, and even less in dispensationalism, which has never intrigued any of them.

Fundamentalists regard the Bible as the keystone of their faith. Their understanding of inspiration and inerrancy comes from Benjamin Warfield's notion of plenary-verbal inspiration, meaning that in the autographs all of the Bible is inspired and the inspiration extends not just to the message God wished to convey, but to the very words chosen by the sacred writers. For many fundamentalists, particularly those not of an intellectual bent, this reduces to the dictation theory of inspiration—the human authors were mere stenographers, their only task being to record what the Voice said. This, of course, implies not only a Bible free from error, which is also the orthodox Catholic position, but also a Bible free from ambiguity and, often, symbolism, one in which the words are taken in *the* plainest sense, which often means the sense they would have if taken out of context. (An exception is John 6, where the Eucharist is promised. This chapter is never taken literally by fundamentalists, but is by Catholics.)

The key problem with fundamentalists' understanding of the Bible is that they have no rational grounds for what they believe. That sounds harsh, but it is true, and fundamentalists admit it. As E. J. Young says, "If the Bible is not a trustworthy witness of its own character, we have no assurance that our Christian faith is founded upon Truth." He argues that refusing to make the Bible alone normative is to embrace "results which are hostile to supernatural Christianity".¹² The Bible must be accepted as the sole rule of faith because any other position leads to the abandonment of Christianity, and that, as Churchill might say, *is something* up with which we will not put. We believe the Bible to be true, say fundamentalists, because to adopt any other position is to deny the truths in which we otherwise believe. It is not hard to see that this position has seldom appealed to the intellectually demanding, since the implication is that it would be salutary to accept even a wrong understanding of the Bible so long as basic Christian truths, whatever one thinks they might be, are protected.

Although the doctrines of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible come first to the tongue of most fundamentalists, the logically prior doctrine is the deity of Christ. For the Catholic, his deity is accepted either on the word of the authoritative and infallible Church or because a dispassionate

examination of the Bible and early Christian history shows that he must have been just what he claimed to be, God. Most Catholics, as a practical matter, use the first method; many—the apologist Arnold Lunn¹³ was a good example—use the second while not denying the first. In either case, there is a certain reasoning involved. For the fundamentalist the assurance of Christ's divinity comes not through reason, or even through faith in the Catholic meaning of the word, but in a different way.

As Warfield put it, “The supreme proof to every Christian of the deity of his Lord is in his own inner experience of the transforming power of his Lord upon the heart and life.”¹⁴ One consequence of this has become painfully clear to many fundamentalists. When one falls into sin, or when the ardor that was present at conversion fades, the transforming power of Christ seems to go, and so might one's belief in his deity. It is one thing to say that belief should so manifest itself in Christians that people will say, “See how they love one another.” It is something else to posit the truth of Christ's divinity on the constancy of human holiness and spiritual consolations. This accounts for many defections from fundamentalism. The dark night of the soul, which visits many, results in jettisoning the fundamentalist position, and often what is embraced is not another brand of Christianity, but a vague agnosticism.

As an appendage to the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and considered equally important in *The Fundamentals*, is the Virgin Birth. (Some fundamentalists list this separately, making six basic doctrines instead of five.) One might expect the reality of heaven and hell or the existence of the Trinity to be next, but the Virgin Birth is taken as a vital belief, since it protects belief in Christ's deity. One should keep in mind, though, that when fundamentalists speak of Christ's birth from a virgin, they mean a virgin only until his birth. Their common understanding is that Mary had later children, all those disciples referred to as Christ's “brethren”.

In reaction to the Social Gospel advocates, who said Christ gave nothing more than a good moral example, the early fundamentalists insisted on their third point, that he died a substitutionary death. He not only took on our sins; he received the penalty that would have been ours. He was actually *punished* by the Father in our stead.

On the matter of the Resurrection fundamentalists do not differ from orthodox Catholics. Christ rose physically from the dead, not just symbolically. His Resurrection was not a collective hallucination of his followers or something invented by pious writers of later years. It really

happened, and to deny its actuality is to deny Scripture's reliability.

The most disputed topic, among fundamentalists themselves, is the Second Coming. If there is agreement, it is only on the point that Christ will physically return to Earth. When that will be is up for grabs. Premillennialists say it will be before the millennium, the thousand-year reign. Postmillennialists say it will be after. There is little consensus on just what the millennium itself will be. There are also disputes about the Rapture and the Tribulation. With respect to the latter, there is widespread disagreement on its nature and its timing with respect to the millennium. Some think it is around the corner, with the Russians playing the role assigned to the northern power in Daniel.¹⁵ Others say it is in the distant future. If Catholics may be called partial to St. Malachy's prophecies about the Popes and to the three secrets of Fatima, fundamentalists may be termed absorbed in chronicling the Last Days, the only difficulty being that no two major commentators agree on what will happen or when.

Such are the five or six main points discussed in the books that gave fundamentalism its name. They are not necessarily the points that most distinguish fundamentalism today. One rarely hears much discussion about the Virgin Birth, for instance. Of course, there is no question about fundamentalists believing that doctrine (but not the perpetual virginity of Mary), but to the general public, and to most fundamentalists themselves, fundamentalism has today a somewhat different emphasis.

First to catch one's eye is the fundamentalists' reliance on the Bible to the complete exclusion of any authority wielded by the Church. The second is their insistence in a faith in Christ as personal Lord and Savior. "Do you accept Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?" they ask. "Have you been saved?" This is unalloyed Christian individualism. The individual is saved without real regard to a church, the congregation, or anyone else. It is a one-to-one relationship, with no mediators, no sacraments, just the individual Christian and his Lord. The Christian *knows* when he has been saved, down to the hour and minute of his salvation, because his salvation came when he "accepted" Christ. It came like a flash, never to be forgotten, the way it came to Paul on the Damascus Road.

In that instant, the fundamentalist's salvation was assured. There is now nothing that can undo it. Without that instant, he would be doomed. That is why the third most visible thing about fundamentalists is their evangelism. If sinners do not undergo the same kind of salvation experience fundamentalists

have undergone, they will go to hell. Fundamentalists perceive a duty to spread their faith—what can be more charitable than to give others a chance for escaping hell?—and in that they have been successful.

Their success is partly due to their discipline. For all their talk about the Catholic Church being “rule-laden”, there are perhaps no Christians who operate today in a more regimented manner. Their rules—mainly nonbiblical, one might add—extend not just to religion and religious practices proper but to facets of everyday life. (Strictures on drinking, gambling, dancing, and smoking come to mind.)¹⁶ What is more, fundamentalists are intensely involved in their local congregations.

Many people returning to the Catholic Church from fundamentalism complain that as fundamentalists they had no time or room for themselves; everything centered around the church. All their friends were members; all their social activities were staged by it. Not to attend Wednesday evening services in addition to one or two services *on* Sunday, not to participate in Bible studies and youth groups, not to dress and act like everyone else in the congregation—these immediately put one beyond the pale, and in a small church (few fundamentalist churches have more than a hundred members) this meant ostracism, a silent invitation to worship elsewhere.

Many of the influences that have given rise to fundamentalism, including the fissiparousness of nineteenth-century Protestantism, have been signs of underlying puritanism—not, of course, the puritanism of the seventeenth-century Puritans, but the attitude that is at the core of every offshoot from traditional Christianity, the desire to return to the purity of the early Church. This kind of puritanism remains the motivating force of fundamentalism, as demonstrated by one of the key charges against the Catholic Church, that it has obscured the original purity of Christianity with centuries of unscriptural encrustations. For the fundamentalist, one of the first duties is to grasp the essence, the pith, of Christianity as it left the mouth of its Founder—and then to admit no “inventions”.

Many Catholics who have written about fundamentalism misunderstand it. They psychologize it into a mass of emotional contradictions. They accept the view of the popular press that fundamentalism is not a matter of theology but of pathology. A man subscribes to the fundamentalist position, it is said, because he is ashamed of being poor, or because he is ill educated, or because the priest or minister at his previous church mistreated him and he is out for revenge or for consoling pats on the back. He does not accept

fundamentalism the way an enlightened liberal accepts liberalism, with consideration and forethought. Some critics come perilously close to concluding that any fundamentalist is a loon. Granted, some are—but so are some Catholics and more than a few secularists.

Peggy L. Shriver, assistant general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States, says that “because an insecure ego can be supported by the scaffolding of a fundamentalist faith, it is not surprising that many people who are ‘marginal’ to society are drawn to fundamentalism. Various studies have shown that there are fewer wealthy and well-educated people who count themselves fundamentalists and a greater number of low-income and less educated people than the population at large.”¹⁷ This gentle put-down is imprudently echoed by Catholic writers, who might be surprised to learn that fundamentalists, such as Loraine Boettner in his *Roman Catholicism*, make the same charge against the Catholic religion, saying Catholic societies are backward compared to Protestant—after all, just look at Spain and Ireland, then at England and the United States. The Catholic Church finds its numbers among the poorer classes, they say, a sign that Catholicism is not blessed by God, since divine election manifests itself through material prosperity.¹⁸

Whatever forces might have steered a man to fundamentalism in the first place—and it must be granted that emotional factors play a part, as they do in most conversions, no matter the direction—he remains a fundamentalist for doctrinal reasons. He might have left his previous church out of anger or frustration, and he might have been attracted to the fundamentalist congregation down the road because the pastor is a fine preacher or because the church members befriended him.

These emotional pushes and pulls are short-lived, and in most cases they merely help the convert do what he wanted to do anyway. He could have found ministers as eloquent or congregants as kind in one of the mainline Protestant churches or even in some eccentric cult, but, as important as those factors might be, they were not the reason he converted. His conversion had to do with doctrines. The doctrines to which he adheres are not ones he discovered for himself, furtively reading the Bible late at night while his wife and children slept. The doctrines he was taught first, and the Bible has been used to justify them.

Fundamentalists use the Bible to protect beliefs that are, in fact, antecedent to the Bible, which is interpreted so it justifies what they already hold,

although most fundamentalists think what they believe comes straight out of the sacred text and that they are merely acknowledging its plain meaning. This confusion on their part is matched by one on the part of most nonfundamentalists, who think fundamentalists interpret Scripture in a strictly literal manner. This is incorrect. Fundamentalists do not take each word of the Bible in its surface sense, although it is commonly thought they do. To justify some of their doctrines, fundamentalists must discover in a metaphor a new “literal” interpretation of Scripture, and they not uncommonly find themselves arguing that what is really the plain, surface meaning is nothing but dangerous symbolism. They do not hesitate to read between the lines if such reading is needed to preserve their position—a position that precedes their scriptural interpretation.

In an analogous fashion, fundamentalists engaged in anti-Catholic work will interpret not just the Bible, but Christian history and Catholic creedal and apologetic works, in whatever way is required for them to prove their main point, that the Catholic religion bears only superficial resemblance to the religion founded by Christ, that it is mainly a religion of men, not of God. Their technique can be demonstrated by scrutinizing representative anti-Catholic publications, groups, and individuals.

Chapter 2

The Anti-Catholic's Sourcebook

We all like a good argument. We like the give-and-take, and we enjoy watching one party score a point and the second return the favor. A good argument, particularly on an important theme, stimulates our minds and helps us draw our own conclusions. We do not demand that each participant give both sides—each needs to give only his own, as well as he can—but we do insist on fair play. We do not want one participant to misrepresent what the other thinks or to make points by using cheap shots. Ridicule, misrepresentation, taking quotations out of context, bending the truth, leaving out important facts—these violate the rules of the game. We feel cheated if one side tries to gain an unfair advantage. If all this is true when the participants meet face to face before an audience, it is even truer when the argument is conducted in writing, when all we have is one side's version tucked between the covers of a book. Nowhere, perhaps, are these rules of fair play violated with greater regularity than in the writings of fundamentalists who attack the Catholic religion.

It is no secret that in recent years fundamentalist churches have been gaining members at a surprising rate. Many of the new recruits are former Catholics. In fact, in many fundamentalist churches, more than half the members converted from Catholicism. The reasons for the conversions are many, but most converts have been influenced by arguments attacking “Romanism”. Some fundamentalists who seek out Catholics as converts are not merely profundamentalist; they are also decidedly anti-Catholic. They expend more effort on abusing the Catholic religion than on justifying their own. They are more interested in showing Catholicism is wrong, no matter what it takes to “prove” that, than they are in showing their position is right.

Just a few years ago people were saying anti-Catholicism was going the way of the dinosaur. If so, it seems the dinosaur has made an unexpected comeback, because anti-Catholicism is healthier now than it has been for years. New organizations dedicated to undermining the Church keep

cropping up, and old ones are revived, and together they turn out more tracts, magazines, and books than ever before—millions of copies each year.

After reading enough of this material one becomes aware that the same points tend to be made in the same way, even in the same words. Who is borrowing from whom? It does not seem that any of these groups relies heavily on any other. Instead, they all seem to fall back on one source, Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*, which might be called the "Bible" of the anti-Catholic movement within fundamentalism. It is in this book that the anti-Catholic position is most extensively expressed. *Roman Catholicism* is worth examining, because what credibility the anti-Catholic movement has depends largely on the credibility of this one volume.

First, a few words about the author. Loraine Boettner has to his name a dozen books, several of them still in print. His first, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, was published in 1932. Other titles include *The Christian Attitude toward War*, *The Atonement*, and *Immortality*. In 1962 Boettner saw through the presses the book for which he is best known, *Roman Catholicism*. It was published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company and has been reprinted numerous times. Well over a hundred thousand copies of *Roman Catholicism* have been sold, most of them in the last few years. After a career of teaching at Protestant schools of divinity, Boettner retired to Rock Port, Missouri, from which he still issues occasional salvos against Catholics, but for the most part he is retired from the fray and gives encouragement to younger people who have taken up his fight.

When *Roman Catholicism* was first published, the book and its author gained instant notoriety. Today there are many persons, organizations, and publications that are better known as promoters of anti-Catholicism, but none is more influential. Few people realize that most professional anti-Catholics are deeply indebted to Loraine Boettner's work. Pick up an anti-Catholic tract, then turn to the same subject in *Roman Catholicism*. As likely as not, the words will be the same, simple plagiarism. In the world of religious bigotry, it seems all roads lead to *Roman Catholicism*. That is not surprising, since this fat book is full of juicy tidbits. Its 466 pages are packed with countless accusations against Catholics and their religion. It was meant to be the definitive anti-Catholic work, something that would give intellectual substance to an attitude unwelcome in most circles.

Roman Catholicism operates at two levels. On the first and more important, it is an attack on the Catholic religion, its charges ranging across

doctrines, ecclesiastical and secular history, and Catholic customs. On the other level the book is a defense of Boettner's own beliefs. As he puts it, "The primary purpose of this work is to set forth in strong contrast the differences between the evangelical Protestant and the Roman Catholic churches, both in regard to doctrine and in regard to practical effects where these two systems have been effective in the lives of the people."¹ Nowadays the term fundamentalist would more commonly be used for the position Boettner espouses, and it is, indeed, mainly fundamentalists who use his text as their source of ammunition against the Catholic Church.

There is no room here to discuss each point Boettner brings up—the refutation of a one-sentence charge may take *a* page, and his tome would require a small library as an adequate reply—but the style of *Roman Catholicism* can be conveyed, and the reader can see there are serious deficiencies in the book, which forms the basis of the anti-Catholic movement.

The main problem with Boettner's *magnum opus* is that it suffers from a real lack of intellectual rigor. For example, he shows virtually no familiarity with the writings of the first several centuries of the Christian era. He skips from the Bible to nineteenth- and twentieth-century anti-Catholic works. Even if he would not go to original sources, he could have examined Johannes Quasten's *Patrology*, the first three volumes of which were composed in the decade before *Roman Catholicism* was written, or Joseph Tixeront's *History of Dogmas*, an older but standard work. A casual reading of these should have demonstrated to him that from the earliest years distinctive Catholic doctrines were present—belief in the Real Presence, the hierarchy of bishops and priests, papal supremacy, suffrages for the dead—and he should have seen there is little support for the fundamentalist position. Even if he refused to draw the ordinary conclusions from Quasten and Tixeront, he at least would have been put on notice that he had more to consider. He just takes too much for granted.

There is no indication that he has made use of any hardheaded apologetic works by Catholics or that he has tested his arguments against a knowledgeable opponent before reducing them to print. His major sources are people who do not just disagree with Catholicism but who openly oppose it, often for what the reader suspects to be base motives. Boettner accepts at face value any claim made by an enemy of the Church. Even when verification of a charge is easy, he does not bother to check up. If he finds something

unflattering, he prints it.

Take as an example his reliance on William Cave, chaplain to King Charles II, who wrote in *The Lives of the Apostles* that in the Greek original of Eusebius Pamphilius' *Ecclesiastical History*, completed about 325, there is no reference to Peter being Bishop of Rome. Boettner accepts this as sufficient proof that the apostle was never in the capital of the Empire, a fact he wishes to use in debunking the papacy.² He could have checked Cave's assertion easily. Had he looked at the two-volume edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* in the Loeb Classical Library, he would have found on pages 144 and 190 of volume one and page 48 of volume two just what Cave said was not there.

Despite the reliance of so many pamphleteers on Boettner's book, the only thing that makes it seem substantial is its weight in pounds. Its weight in scholarly attainment is nil. It has an index of authors and an index of subjects, each only a page and a half long. In the whole book there are only two dozen footnotes, all of them added to reflect minor changes in the Catholic Church since Vatican II. Within the text biblical passages are properly cited, but references to Catholic works are usually so vague as to discourage checking. A certain Pope is alleged to have said something, but there is no citation. A Catholic author of the seventeenth century supposedly claimed such-and-so, but again no reference. A quotation might be given, but no hint as to its source. Or there might be mention of a book, but no page number. Most statements that in other books would deserve footnotes get nothing at all here. Sources that include both title and page number (and they are rare) are generally to non-Catholic works. Indeed, if this were a book on science or economics, and if it were put out by an academic press, the publisher would have insisted on literally hundreds of notes to back up the equally large number of citations, claims, and interpretations. But we get none of that here.

The lack of citations would not be important if Boettner were merely expounding his own position, but they are crucial when he dredges up what seem to be self-condemnatory admissions by Catholics. He would be under no obligation to burden his book with references if he were only stating what fundamentalism is. But more must be expected of an author who accuses the opposition of knavery and deception.

Although not all works referred to in the body of the text are listed in the bibliography, most are—yet the bibliography names only twenty-three books and three magazines. Only seven of the books, and none of the magazines,

are by Catholics.³ One book, by Fulton Sheen, is an “inspirational” text and, while enjoyable reading, has little to do with the matters discussed in *Roman Catholicism*. A second book is a look at the lives of a few Popes; another is on Catholic principles of politics, a topic hardly touched on by Boettner. Three others are overviews of the Catholic faith written for laymen, not one of which was designed to answer the kinds of attacks Boettner launches.⁴ The seventh book is Philip Hughes’ *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, an abridgment of his three-volume work *A History of the Church*. As it turns out, Boettner refers to only a few lines from Hughes’ book, and those are taken out of context.⁵

Of the sixteen books by non-Catholics, six are by former Catholic priests: Emmett McLoughlin; L. H. Lehmann; Joseph Zacchello; and Charles Chiniquy, the famous nineteenth-century sensationalist.⁶ There is also an expose by a former nun. To round out the picture, Boettner lists a book by Paul Blanshard, perhaps the best-known professional anti-Catholic of a generation ago. These are the books—written by disaffected ex-Catholics or by people who never have been Catholic but who have made their mark in the world by pushing unadorned bigotry—from which Boettner gets his juiciest information. Relying on them for the straight story on the Catholic Church is like relying on a political candidate to tell you all the good points about his opponent. Surely Boettner would object to an attack on Martin Luther’s theology that made use of works by disgruntled ex-Lutherans but ignored Luther’s own writings. He would say, and rightly so, that such an attack was unbalanced, and that is just the kind of thing a reader might say of *Roman Catholicism* when he discovers how much it relies on tales from angry ex-Catholics.

Now it may well be that a man leaving one religion for another can write fairly, without bitterness, about the one he left behind. After all, John Henry Newman did just that in his autobiography, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. But it stands to reason that most people who suddenly think they have an urge to write about their change of beliefs just want to vent their frustrations or justify their actions. Their books should be read and used with discretion, and they should not be used at all as explanations of the beliefs of their old religion if the books betray the least hint of rancor. Unfortunately, Boettner cannot keep away from such books.

Because of his reliance on disgruntled former Catholics, Boettner has absolutely no appreciation of the Catholic religion from the inside. He has

made little effort to learn what the Catholic Church says about itself and how Catholics answer the objections he makes. What “inside information” he has comes from people who can hardly be trusted to tell the Catholic side of the story. In case after case, no matter what the topic, Boettner provides only a statement of the fundamentalist position, which he then juxtaposes to a caricature of the Catholic position as set out by one of the ex-priests. Without fail, whenever the Catholic position looks foolish, as it often does in his book, it is because it has been entirely misstated. Boettner is not content with honestly giving the Catholic view and then explaining why he considers it wrong; he must give a parody of the Catholic view, and then he refutes *that*.

But that is not all. There are literally hundreds of errors of fact in this book. In any ten consecutive pages one can find ten palpable blunders. These are real mistakes, not innocent things such as typographical errors. There are major errors, and there are minor ones, and they lead one to ask at what point does sloppiness become more than mere negligence? When does it show actual bad faith, a deliberate unwillingness to do one’s homework?

Consider the case of Bishop Josip Strossmayer. First take the story as given by Boettner in his chapter on the infallibility of the Pope. This doctrine was formally defined at the First Vatican Council in 1870: Before the definition was voted on by the assembled prelates, some spoke against ratifying it. One who did so was Strossmayer. Here is how Boettner recounts the story:

Among those who opposed the decree was the scholarly archbishop [actually, bishop] Strossmayer, who made a famous speech in which he declared boldly: “I have set myself to study with the most serious attention the Old and New Testaments, and I have asked these venerable monuments of truth to make known to me if the holy pontiff, who presides here, is the true successor of St. Peter, vicar of Christ, and the infallible doctor of the church. I find in the apostolic days no question of a pope, successor to St. Peter, the vicar of Jesus Christ, any more than a Mohammed who did not then exist. Now having read the whole New Testament, I declare before God, with my hand raised to that great crucifix, that I have found no trace of the papacy as it exists at this moment.”

Immediately after that long quotation, Boettner gives what he says is the end of the speech. The last sentence reads: “I conclude victoriously, with history, with reason, with logic, with good sense, and with a Christian conscience, that Jesus Christ did not confer any supremacy on St. Peter, and that the bishops of Rome did not become sovereigns of the church, but only by confiscating one by one all the rights of the episcopate.”⁷

Strong language, eh? Boettner gives no source for these words attributed to

Strossmayer, and with good reason. Their source was not Strossmayer. Had Boettner turned to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, he would have discovered half a page on “the scholarly archbishop”, and he would have discovered that the speech is a well-known forgery, composed by a former Augustinian priest named José Agustín de Escudero.⁸

What was Strossmayer’s real position on infallibility? Did he oppose the promulgation of the dogma? Yes, he did. He opposed it for ecumenical reasons. He was the bishop of Diakovar, in what is now Yugoslavia. For years he had been working for a reunification of the Eastern Orthodox churches with the Catholic Church. He thought such a reunification was a real possibility and that the formal promulgation of the doctrine of papal infallibility would be an obstacle.

Boettner explains none of this, but the facts were easily accessible to him. Read again the words attributed to Strossmayer. Do they read like the words of a European who obtained a doctorate in philosophy at twenty and a doctorate in theology at twenty-seven, who taught canon law at the University of Vienna, who was praised for his “remarkably good Latin” by the Pope? No, they read like the words of a longtime Protestant. Note, too, the sloppy way the forgery was drawn up. This “scholarly archbishop” prefaces his declaration with the clause “now having read the whole New Testament”, which apparently means he had never gone through the sacred text before. At the time of Vatican I Strossmayer was fifty-five. Are we to believe this learned and mature man had never read the New Testament before the convening of the Council?

Boettner’s great failing with respect to this incident is that he took no pains at all to investigate the Catholic version of the story. It would have taken ten minutes at a library to discover that the speech was not what it purported to be. He did not have to believe the *Catholic Encyclopedia* or the numerous ecclesiastical histories written by Catholics, yet he should have become suspicious when they said the speech is a forgery. He should have done further homework. But he was not as interested in accuracy as in sensationalism, which is always the enemy of truth. This story is such a great blow against the Catholic Church—why spoil it with the facts?

This gaffe about Strossmayer’s speech is bad enough, but it is prefaced by a worse one. The beginning of the chapter on the infallibility of the Pope presents the reader with Boettner’s explanation of what Vatican I decreed. First he accurately quotes *Pastor Aeternus*, which states that the Pope is

infallible when “he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church.”⁹

Then comes the blooper. Boettner says, “Infallibility is not claimed for every statement made by the pope [true enough], but only for those made when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, seated in his papal chair, the chair of St. Peter, and speaking in his official capacity as head of the church.”¹⁰ At the end of the sentence is an asterisk, which takes the reader to this footnote: “A scientific commission appointed by pope Paul VI in July, 1968, to investigate the antiquity of the ‘Chair of St. Peter’. . . reported early in 1969 that the chair dates from the late ninth century. . . .” The point is that Peter’s real chair does not exist, so a Pope cannot sit in it. Since, by official decree of Vatican I, he is infallible only when sitting in Peter’s chair, he cannot issue infallible definitions at all. The Catholic Church is refuted by its own archaeology!

Boettner entirely misconstrues the meaning of *ex cathedra*. It indeed translates as “from the throne” or “from the chair”, but it does not mean the Pope has to be sitting in the chair Peter owned for his definition to be infallible. To speak “from the chair” is to speak in an official capacity, as when we say a judge speaks “from the bench”, even if he makes his ruling while standing in the courthouse hallway. This is another mistake Boettner could have avoided had he turned to a dictionary or encyclopedia.

Although he says infallibility extends only to matters of faith and morals, and then only when a Pope makes an official pronouncement addressed to all Christians, Boettner does not understand the principles he quotes. He apparently does not realize that a Pope is not claimed to be infallible when he tries to predict tomorrow’s weather or solve today’s arithmetic problem. This should be apparent to Boettner, but it is not, as shown by the following example. He relates that in the year 1590 Sixtus V issued an edition of the Vulgate which he declared to be final, and prohibited under an anathema the publication of any new editions thereafter unless they should be exactly like that one. However, he died soon after, and scholars found numerous errors in his edition. Two years later a new edition was published under pope Clement VIII, and that is the one in general use today. Clearly Sixtus V was in error—another example of the absurdity of that doctrine which holds that the pope is infallible in matters of faith and morals.¹¹

But a Pope's order that no one should publish a version of the Vulgate differing from the official version has nothing to do with faith and morals. It is not a matter of faith that any particular edition of the Bible is without printing errors or that it has been translated accurately. The order by Sixtus V was merely a matter of discipline; it did not define a point of doctrine or of morals, a distinction Boettner does not appreciate.

One of his key points in *Roman Catholicism* is that "Romanism" must be untrue because in so many particulars it differs from the Christianity of the New Testament. Over the centuries, he says, the Catholic Church has added beliefs, rituals, and customs that contradict what is found in the Bible. He calls this "the melancholy evidence of Rome's steadily increasing departure from the simplicity of the Gospel", and he claims "human inventions have been substituted for Bible truth and practice".¹²

His point is that Catholicism cannot be the religion established by Christ because it has all these "extras", forty-five of which he lists under the title "Some Roman Catholic Heresies and Inventions".¹³ A few he examines at greater length later in the book, but most are mentioned once here and then conveniently forgotten. Although his listing takes up little space, its tone is representative of that of the book as a whole. Consider a few of the "inventions".

Item: "Making the sign of the cross. . . [A.D.] 300".¹⁴ That's it. That's the whole charge, that the sign of the Cross was not "invented" until well into the Christian era. Actually, Christians began making the sign of the Cross at a very early date. The theologian Tertullian, writing in 211, said, "We furrow our forehead with the sign [of the Cross]."¹⁵ Making the sign was already an old custom when he wrote. It may have been common even while some of the apostles were alive. But the mistake Boettner makes in the antiquity of the practice is not the important thing. The real question is: Why does he include this point at all? The answer: because the sign of the Cross is something not found in the pages of the New Testament. The reader is to conclude that it must be contrary to Christianity, yet that makes little sense. In fact, such a principle undermines even Boettner's own fundamentalism.

After all, fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the Resurrection. And what about the form of fundamentalist

services: hymns, readings, preaching? No mention is made in the New Testament of the form of worship (other than that set out at the Last Supper, which gives the outline of the Mass). If Catholicism has changed matters of practice or customs over the centuries, fundamentalism has done the same. The proper question is not whether the Church founded by Christ looks today exactly as it did then (if that is the criterion, then his Church cannot be found anywhere), but whether what purports to be his Church has kept all the same beliefs, while understanding them better and drawing out their implications more deeply, even if in external practices the Church has developed and changed over the years.

Item: “Priests began to dress differently from laymen. . .500”. So what? The same charge can be brought against fundamentalist preachers who conduct services while dressed in choir robes. Boettner’s statement happens to be true, but it proves nothing. The main vestment worn by priests during Mass is the chasuble. It is really nothing more than a stylized Roman overcoat. In the sixth century, while fashions changed around them, for liturgical purposes priests kept to the clothing they had used for some time. They did not adopt special dress for Mass, but, as everyday fashions changed over time, their dress began to stand out.

On very formal occasions today, such as a presidential inauguration, the principal players wear top hats and tails. You do not otherwise see that kind of clothing anymore, but remember that Abraham Lincoln wore the equivalent as his regular attire. The present-day use of top hats and tails is another example of dress for a special occasion being frozen in a particular style. It just so happens that priests’ vestments are much older than top hats.

Item: “Extreme unction. . . 526”. This single line is no doubt intended to make the reader believe the Catholic Church invented this sacrament, which is also known as the anointing of the sick, five centuries after Christ. Notice that Boettner makes no effort to give the Church’s explanation of the sacrament’s origin. Why? Because the origin is found in the New Testament itself: “Is one of you sick? Let him send for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord’s name. Prayer offered in faith will restore the sick man, and the Lord will give him relief; if he is guilty of sins, they will be pardoned” (James 5:14-15). This scriptural injunction was followed from the earliest days of the Church. If Boettner wanted to say this sacrament was “invented”, he should have said it was “invented” while the apostles were still alive, but that, of course, would give

the sacrament legitimacy.

Item: “Latin language, used in prayer and worship, imposed by [Pope] Gregory I. . . 600”. Now it is true that Latin was used in worship in the year 600. The Church spread from the Greek-speaking East to the Latin-speaking West in apostolic times. One of Paul’s epistles was written to the Christians in Latin-speaking Rome. It should cause no raised eyebrows to learn that worship was undertaken in the vernacular, which was Greek in much of the East and Latin in the West. What is Boettner’s point? Maybe his complaint is that the Pope “imposed” Latin, forbidding other languages to be used. In the West, Latin did come to be used in the Mass to the exclusion of vernacular languages (such as French, German, and English) that developed centuries later because Latin became the official language of the Catholic Church—something it still is. (Vatican documents of importance are still issued in authoritative Latin versions.) Are we to conclude that there is some mystery about it? Well, there probably is, to people who do not read Latin, just as there is mystery in French to those who know only English.

So what is Boettner trying to say with this “invention”? Perhaps he wants to suggest that, until recently, priests used Latin, even after the people had turned to vernacular tongues, in order to keep secret such things as what was happening during Mass. That theory does not hold up, since even Catholics who knew no Latin knew what was going on at Mass—all they had to do was look on the right-hand pages of their missals to see the translation of the Latin that was on the facing pages. If Church authorities were trying to keep laymen ignorant about the Mass, by encouraging the use of missals they approached their task in a self-defeating way.

Item: “Worship of the cross, images, and relics authorized in. . . 786”. Do Catholics give slivers of wood, carvings of marble, and pieces of bone the kind of adoration they give God? That is what Boettner seems to say. What if a Catholic were to say to him, “I saw you kneeling with your Bible in your hands. Why do you worship a book?” He would rightly answer that he does not worship a book. He uses the Bible as an aid to prayer. Likewise, Catholics do not worship the Cross or images or relics. They use these physical objects to remind themselves of Christ and his special friends, the saints in heaven. The man who keeps a picture of his family in his wallet does not worship his wife and children, but he honors them. The woman who keeps her parents’ picture on the mantel does not subscribe to ancestor worship; the picture just reminds her of them so she can honor them. (Recall

Ex 20:12: “Honor thy father and thy mother.”) No one really thinks the pictures are themselves the objects of worship.

The origin of Boettner’s story is this. In the Byzantine Empire there developed what was known as the Iconoclastic heresy, which held that all images (statues, paintings, mosaics) of saints and of God must be destroyed on the theory that they were meant to be worshiped. Eventually, around 786, this heresy was defeated, and the old custom, going back to the first century, of permitting artistic representations was again allowed. Boettner has the date right; he just does not understand the story.

Item: “Baptism of bells instituted by Pope John XIII. . . 965”. What is the reader supposed to make of this? Most non-Catholics realize that Catholics baptize infants, but bells? If Catholics think they can baptize bells, why not baptize automobiles or any other inanimate object? The charge, if true, does make the Church look silly—and in a sense it really is true. There was indeed a “baptism of bells”, but it was not a baptism. When a church received new bells for its tower, the bells were blessed, usually by the local bishop. Any object can be blessed, a blessing being a dedication to a sacred purpose. The ceremony used in the blessing of bells was reminiscent in some ways of the ceremony used in baptism (the bells were even given nicknames), so in popular usage it came to be called the “baptism of bells”, although no Catholic thought the bells actually received a sacrament. The phrase is therefore wholly innocent, but when anti-Catholics refer to it in just a few words it looks suspicious.

Item: “Celibacy of the priesthood, decreed by pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand). . . 1079”. Anti-Catholics take considerable delight in noting that some of the apostles, including Peter, were married and that for centuries Catholic priests were allowed to marry. Catholics do not deny that some early Popes were married and that celibacy, for priests in the Latin (Western) Rite, did not become mandatory until the early Middle Ages. Anti-Catholic writers generally fail to note that all along married men have been eligible for ordination in the Eastern rites. Celibacy has never been mandatory in those rites, but in the Latin Rite it has been, as a matter of discipline. It came to be thought in the West that priests could more perfectly fulfill their duties if they remained unmarried. This follows Paul’s advice.

After saying he wished those to whom he was writing were, like himself, unmarried (1 Cor 7:7-9), Paul said he thought celibacy was the best state in which to be (1 Cor 7:26), noting that “he who is unmarried is concerned with

God's claim, asking how he is to please God; whereas the married man is concerned with the world's claim, asking how he is to please his wife" (1 Cor 7:32-33). When a man becomes a priest in the Latin Rite, he knows that he will not be able to marry. Marriage is a good thing (in fact, Catholics acknowledge Christ elevated marriage to a sacrament), but it is something priests are willing to forgo for the sake of being better priests. No one is forced to be a priest (or a nun, for that matter; nuns also do not marry) so no Catholic is forced to be celibate. Those who want to take the vows of the religious life should not object to having to follow the rules. That does not mean that the rules, as found at any one time, are ideal or cannot be modified—celibacy is a disciplinary, not a doctrinal, injunction—but it does mean that it is unfair to imply from the rules, as Boettner has, that the Catholic religion scorns marriage.

Item: "Transubstantiation proclaimed by Pope Innocent III. . . 1215". The implication is that transubstantiation was not believed until 1215—that it was, indeed, an "invention". The facts are otherwise. Transubstantiation is just the technical term used to describe what happens when the bread and wine used at Mass are turned into the actual Body and Blood of Christ. The belief that this occurs has been held from the earliest times. It stems from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians, and the several accounts of the Last Supper. As centuries passed, theologians exercised their reason on the belief to understand more completely how such a thing could happen and what its happening would imply. Because some of them, in trying to explain the Real Presence, developed unsound theories,¹⁶ it became evident that more precise terminology was needed to ensure the integrity of the belief. The word transubstantiation was finally chosen because it eliminated certain unorthodox interpretations of the doctrine, and the term was formally imposed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. So the use of the technical term was new, but not the doctrine. Similarly, although the term Trinity was first used by Theophilus of Antioch about 181, Christians certainly believed in the doctrine from apostolic times. They may not have understood its ramifications as they are understood today, but they believed in the Trinity. The doctrine was not invented when the official term was coined.

Item: "Auricular confession of sins to a priest instead of to God, instituted by pope Innocent III, in Lateran Council. . . 1215". It is charges such as this that make one doubt the good faith of professional anti-Catholics. It would

have taken little to discover the antiquity of auricular confession—and even less to learn that Catholics do not tell their sins to a priest “instead of to God”, but to God *through* a priest, appointed by our Lord as an *alter Christus*, or “other Christ”, an official stand-in for Christ.

Origen, writing around 244, referred to the sinner who “does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord”.¹⁷ Cyprian of Carthage, writing seven years later, said, “Finally, of how much greater faith and more salutary fear are they who . . . confess to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience.”¹⁸ In the fourth century Aphraates gave this advice to priests: “If anyone uncovers his wound before you, give him the remedy of repentance. And he that is ashamed to make known his weakness, encourage him so that he will not hide it from you. And when he has revealed it to you, do not make it public.”¹⁹

These men, writing as much as a thousand years before the Lateran Council of 1215, were referring to a practice that was already old and well established, a practice stemming from apostolic times. Christ commissioned the apostles this way: “When you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound” (Jn 20:23). Clearly, no priest can forgive sins on Christ’s behalf unless first told the sins by the penitent. Auricular confession is implied in the very institution of the sacrament. The Lateran Council did not “invent” the practice; it merely reaffirmed it while emphasizing the importance of penance.

Item: “Adoration of the wafer (host), decreed by pope Honorius III. . . 1220”. What the reader is supposed to think, apparently, is that Catholics worship the bread used at Mass. They do not. What they worship is Christ, and they believe the bread and the wine are turned into his actual Body and Blood, including not only his human nature, but also his divine nature. If Catholics are right about that, then surely the host deserves to be worshiped, since it really is God. This matter was properly dealt with in 1769 by Samuel Johnson, who was an Anglican, not a Catholic. His biographer, James Boswell, asked him about “the idolatry of the Mass”. “Sir,” replied Dr. Johnson, “there is no idolatry in the Mass. [Catholics] believe God to be there, and they worship him.”²⁰ So, if Catholics are right, then a Pope would be correct in decreeing that the host should be worshiped, just as he would be right to say Jesus should be worshiped if he were to walk into the room. Boettner should direct his complaint not at some nonexistent worship of

ordinary bread, but at Catholics' notion that the bread becomes something other than bread.

Item: "Bible forbidden to laymen, placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by the Council of Valencia. . . 1229". This looks damaging, but the first thing to note is that there are several errors here. The first is that the Index was established in 1543, so a council held in 1229 hardly could have listed a book on it. Second, there apparently never has been a Church council held in Valencia, Spain. Even if there had been, it could not have been held in 1229 because the city was then controlled by the Moors. It is inconceivable that Moslems, who were at war with Spanish Christians and had been off and on for five centuries, would allow Catholic bishops to hold a council in one of their chief cities. The Christian armies did not liberate Valencia from Moorish rule until nine years later, in 1238. So Valencia is out. But there is another possibility, and that is Toulouse, France, where a council (but not an ecumenical council) was indeed held in 1229. And, yes, that council dealt with the Bible, yet here again Boettner errs. He says the Bible was forbidden to laymen; the implication is that no layman anywhere was permitted from that point on to read any Bible. Not so.

The council held in Toulouse dealt with the Albigensian heresy, a variety of Manichaeism, which maintained that marriage is evil because the flesh is evil. From this the heretics concluded that fornication could be no sin because what happens to flesh is of no importance. They even encouraged ritualistic suicide among their members because self-murder, which affected only an evil body, could not be immoral. They opposed the taking of oaths, and this undermined the social order, since feudalism rested on oaths of loyalty to one's superior, much the way our society rests on the security of contracts.

In order to promulgate their views, the Albigensians used vernacular versions of the Bible to "substantiate" their theories. The Church had no complaint about mere translations of the Bible; vernacular versions had been appearing for centuries. But the Albigensians were twisting the Bible to support an immoral moral system. So the bishops at Toulouse restricted the use of the Bible until the heresy was ended. They were trying to stop the heresy's spread because it was the cause of civil unrest and considerable suffering. Their action was a local one, and when the Albigensian problem disappeared, so did the force of their order, which never affected more than southern France. This is hardly the across-the-board prohibition of the Bible

that Boettner, for debating purposes, would like to see but that never existed.

Item: “Cup forbidden to the people at communion by Council of Constance. . . 1414”. The implication is that bishops and priests were trying to keep from laymen something they should have had by rights. The real situation is not hard to understand. The Catholic position has always been that after the Consecration the actual Body and Blood of Christ are contained in the smallest particle of the host or the tiniest drop from the cup. One does not receive only the Body in the host and only the Blood from the cup. If that were so, then for a complete Communion one indeed would need to partake of both. But if both the Body and Blood are contained in each, then the communicant needs to receive only one, if there are good reasons for imposing such a restriction. In 1414 there seemed to be. The first reason was that some people misunderstood the Eucharist and thought it had to be received under both forms because one form contained only the Body and the other only the Blood. By restricting communicants to the host alone the Church emphasized the true doctrine. The other reason was a practical one. In giving the cup to the laity there was a chance the contents would be spilled, so, out of respect, the restriction was imposed.

Item: “Apocryphal books added to the Bible by the Council of Trent. . . 1546”. This is reminiscent of the remark made in *1066 and All That* that at the English Reformation “the pope and his followers seceded from the Church of England”—the difference being that Boettner is serious. The fact is that the Council of Trent did not add to the Bible what Protestants call the apocryphal books. Instead, the Reformers dropped from the Bible books that had been in common use for centuries. The Council of Trent, convened to reaffirm Catholic doctrines and to revitalize the Church, proclaimed that these books always had belonged to the Bible and had to remain in it. After all, it was the Catholic Church, in the fourth century, that officially decided which books composed the canon of the Bible and which did not. The Council of Trent came on the scene about twelve centuries later and merely restated the ancient position.

These “inventions” are representative of the forty-five listed by Boettner. No effort is made to give sources for his charges, and little effort is made to say what the significance of the “inventions” might be. That task is left to innuendo. What Boettner implies is that any belief or practice not found in the pages of the New Testament in plain words must be spurious and must have been instituted for some nefarious purpose.

What he does not point out is that fundamentalism has doctrines and customs that are not found in the Bible either. Many fundamentalist churches, for example, forbid the drinking of wine as sinful, yet Christ not only drank wine—he was even accused of being a drunkard (Lk 7:34)—but he made wine out of water, hardly something he would have done had he disapproved of drinking it. The examples could be multiplied. The fact is that no church looks exactly the same as that of the New Testament era, and, since Christ founded a living Church, one should expect it, like any living thing, to grow and mature, changing somewhat in appearance while maintaining the same identity and substance, holding on to the original deposit of faith while coming to understand it more deeply. The real question is not why Catholicism has produced “inventions” but why one thinks Christ’s Church should not have.

The imaginativeness displayed in Boettner’s “inventions” is representative of the writing one finds throughout *Roman Catholicism*. Consider some of his other comments. He calls All Souls’ Day, November 2, “Purgatory Day”,²¹ a term never used by Catholics because the feast is not in commemoration of purgatory but of the souls there. He thinks the sacrament of orders involves not just the ordination of priests, but the “consecration of nuns”.²² He believes Our Lady of Guadalupe was really “a goddess worshipped by the Indians in Mexico”.²³ As an argument against monasticism, he says Christ “did not withdraw himself from the world, nor did he teach his disciples to do so”.²⁴ Boettner forgets that Christ spent forty days in the desert in preparation for his public ministry (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13), and if that is not withdrawing oneself from the world, what is?

More common than these silly mistakes are Boettner’s appeals to sensationalism. He says “the feeling of fear and dread of the priest, so characteristic of people in Romanist lands, is comparable only to the fear and dread that pagan people have for the witch doctor”,²⁵ which demonstrates how little he knows of either. He argues against the Real Presence by saying the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist amounts to “cannibalism”.²⁶ He suggests the Church encourages devotion to Mary because pilgrimages made in her honor bring “huge revenues to the Vatican”.²⁷ What is more, Mary is thought of by Catholics “as a kind of fourth person of the Blessed Trinity”.²⁸ He believes a “large number of gangsters and crooked politicians in the big cities . . . have maintained their standing in the church while continuing

uninterruptedly their evil practices. . . . It is generally accepted that Romanists, having been to Mass, especially on Sunday, can do about as they please the remainder of the day.”²⁹

Boettner approves of the opinion of another writer that “the intellectual and moral level of priests is not nearly as high as, for instance, that of teachers and doctors, and. . . only a minority have any exceptional ability or deep religious feeling”.³⁰ He asks, “Why is it. . . that the Roman Catholics of Southern Ireland are so inferior to their Protestant neighbors in Northern Ireland?” His answer is a quotation from Charles Chiniquy, who said “the principal cause of the degradation of Ireland is the enslavement of the Irish women by means of the confessional”.³¹ And, according to a book Boettner cites, young women who enter the convent are taught to hate their parents.³² The list could go on, but why bother?

Bishop Fulton Sheen said that few people in America hate the Catholic religion, but many people hate what they mistakenly believe is the Catholic religion—and that if what is hated really were the Catholic religion, Catholics would hate it, too. Confusing lists—lists intended to cause confusion, such as the one published in *Roman Catholicism*—and gratuitous slurs have done much to foster this hatred and confusion. What is more, they have discouraged fundamentalists from finding out what the Catholic religion really is, and that is a disservice to both fundamentalists and Catholics.

A reader can forgive an author a few mistakes. Perhaps the publication schedule did not allow all the checking and rechecking he might have wanted. Maybe the book’s editor was incompetent. The typesetter may have erred. But when the mistakes are so gross and so frequent as Boettner’s, when there is almost no effort to present the other side’s point of view, when the “authorities” one relies on to state the Catholic position are mainly professional Catholic baiters—when all this happens, can the reader be blamed for thinking the book was composed in bad faith?

Like others before him, Loraine Boettner has found an enemy of his own fashioning. He castigates it, misrepresents it, ridicules it, but it is not the Catholic religion as Catholics know it, and the “history” he presents is not the history of the Catholic Church. He has given the public what may be fundamentalism’s most sustained attack on “Romanism”. It is an attack that has enjoyed, so far, a certain success, but its manifest inadequacy suggests that it, too, will pass. *Roman Catholicism* has been an effective propaganda tool only because its arguments were not challenged early enough by

Catholics. Now that is changing. Eventually Boettner's book and the anti-Catholic movement relying on it will be widely appreciated to be the embarrassments they are. Toward that end, it may be profitable to examine some of the groups and persons that have drawn their inspiration from Boettner.

Chapter 3

A Mission to Catholics

Outside the Baptist church where the head of Mission to Catholics International was to speak there was a large table filled with Catholic artifacts. It was set up for the titillation of the congregants. People were shaking their heads over what they saw, wondering how these pagan trinkets could be used by folks who called themselves Christians. Bartholomew F. (“Bart”) Brewer, a former Discalced Carmelite priest, was going to tell these California Baptists the dark secrets of the Catholic Church. He had been to this church before, but they were anxious to hear more stories about the people trapped in Romanism. Next week he would be halfway across the country, telling the same things to others, some old friends, some new listeners.

Ruth Brewer, Bart’s wife, stood behind the table and explained what these peculiar items were. She pointed out holy cards, rosaries, medals, scapulars, crucifixes. The main attractions were a chalice filled with small hosts and a large priest’s host, all presumably unconsecrated. They were brittle with age, but quite serviceable—“Cookie Christs”, as some opponents of the Church call them. To one side were some of the dozens of tracts published by Mission to Catholics, each attacking some facet of Catholicism, and books and cassette tapes that the Brewers’ ministry made available. It was a festive occasion.¹

The service began with the customary hymns, a few homiletic words from the minister, and announcements from Brother This and Sister That. Then Bart Brewer was introduced, and he told them what he had told them before, and they loved it. “Amen, brother!” someone shouted, and he was echoed by others in the small church. “Amen, amen!” Heads nodded in agreement at each revelation of Catholic iniquity and shook in despair as the listeners were told of the doom awaiting Romanists if they did not convert to Christianity.

The talk was part anatomical, part autobiographical. Brewer dissected Catholicism, using quotations from the Bible to show how it strayed from the

New Testament. The treatments of Catholic doctrine and history were cursory and, unsurprisingly, skewed; there was no effort to suggest what the Catholic rejoinders might be. He mentioned experiences as a priest, how his reading the Bible convinced him the Catholic Church was not the Church established by Christ. He spoke about his ministry, which started small but, although still small in terms of personnel (his wife, at least one paid assistant, and several volunteers to handle the mail), had grown so that he regularly crisscrossed the country and mailed out hundreds of thousands of tracts and thousands of books² and cassettes each year.³

He ended his talk the way he ends them all, with an appeal for action. If Catholics do not leave the Church of Rome, he said, they will be damned. Like the Moslems, like the Jews, they will go to hell, and their pious actions will not help them in the least. They must be saved, and it is up to real Christians to take the gospel to them. The way to do that is to wean them from the Catholic Church, showing them its errors, how it contradicts the Bible, how it has been built on paganism.

A good way to start, he said, is by forming a committee for evangelization. The members pray together and then head for the front, the lines of battle being drawn outside Catholic churches. There, as people leave Mass on Sunday morning, Mission to Catholics tracts are distributed. (The most zealous evangelists might, after the last Mass and despite treading on pagan ground, enter the churches and, going even further than Brewer advises, slip tracts into missalettes. That way Catholics would read the truth about the Mass during the Mass itself.)⁴

Of course, distributing tracts implies fielding questions, so the committee members would have to do more than just pray in preparation for their ministry. They would have to study. First would come Scripture. Already avid Bible readers, they would have to redouble their efforts to anticipate any Catholic rebuttals. Then, of course, they would review the Mission to Catholics materials, including its tracts; monthly newsletter, *Challenger*; and Bart Brewer's autobiography, *Pilgrimage from Rome*.⁵ Next, they could turn to literature put out by other anti-Catholic organizations. There would be much to learn, but much to learn from. Indeed, there is no shortage of anti-Catholic materials and no shortage of anti-Catholic organizations. This is a boom industry, and Bart Brewer is on the cutting edge. But his is not the only group convincing people to leave St. Miscellanius' for Good Book Baptist, and Mission to Catholics was not even first on the scene, nor has it received

the most press.

At the fringe, and therefore garnering the most publicity, are Tony Alamo and Jack Chick. Alamo's is the ministry that distributes posters claiming that the Catholic Church owns all the major media—which, if true, would at least demonstrate that the Church is the worst-managed organization in the world, since it cannot even instruct its employees to write good copy about itself. Chick's is the outfit that publishes the *Alberto* comic books and pocket-sized booklets, also illustrated, that reveal secrets hidden even from Maria Monk. These two groups account for many column inches, but few conversions. They are the perfect bogeymen: frightening in visage, but essentially harmless. To be converted by them, one already has to be, mentally, a lost cause, the kind of person who would as likely support flat-Earthism or preach a diet of yak milk and powdered sparrow eggs.

More responsible, if that is the word, and certainly more effective, are groups such as the Conversion Center, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Christians Evangelizing Catholics, and Mission to Catholics International. Some have been around for decades and have seen themselves revived by the renewed interest in anti-Catholicism. Others rely on television and rake in a bundle, part of it, ironically enough, from Catholics. But most anti-Catholic organizations are small, confining their work to a single state or even to a single city. Of all the groups, large or small, Mission to Catholics has the greatest variety of literature for sale and is surely one of the most effective in producing conversions.

Bart Brewer's account of his conversion to fundamentalism appeared first in a tract, *The Conversion of a Catholic Priest*. It was expanded into *Pilgrimage from Rome*, published in 1982 by what is perhaps the leading anti-Catholic publisher, Bob Jones University Press. The book, although more complete than the tract, is less a self-revelation than a course in anti-Catholicism set in the first person.

Most people think Catholics convert to fundamentalism because they conclude the Church is too "liberal" dogmatically and that they convert to modernist religions or no religion because the Church is perceived to be too "conservative". Bart Brewer's conversion throws these notions for a loop. His conversion to a more "conservative" Christianity came about through what is generally regarded as a "liberal" motive: dislike of celibacy.

He was ordained in 1957, at age twenty-eight, at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D. C. for the Discalced Carmelites.

Shortly thereafter he was assigned to the Philippines. There he promptly got involved romantically with a high school girl, and his bishop as promptly sent him packing for home. He left the Carmelites and became a secular priest, working in a parish in San Diego. “My psychological motivation for celibacy was decreasing rapidly”, he wrote.⁶ “I was not at all hesitant then [when Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council] to be outspoken in my anticipation that the law of celibacy would be removed.” When it was not, “for the first time I doubted the authority of my church, not in religious pride, but in true sincerity”.

He admitted recognizing that “celibacy was not dogma but tradition and church law”, and he said that throughout his religious schooling (“four years of the prep, two years of the novitiate, three years of philosophy, and four years of theology”), “never once did I question one iota of Roman Catholic teaching”. It is a little hard to see how the Church’s refusal to change a mere disciplinary rule could result in Brewer’s doubting the authority of the Church—the wisdom of the Church’s leadership, perhaps, but its authority?

Sounding like a modernist shedding his Catholic past, Brewer “soon realized that to think and to reason on one’s own, without the help of Mother Church, was not sin”, although nowhere has he cited a Catholic authority that suggests thinking on one’s own is sinful. He found himself working in Long Beach as a Navy chaplain, going home each night to his mother’s apartment, where the two of them would listen to fundamentalist radio preachers. They “began to question teachings such as purgatory, the immaculate conception of Mary, the assumption of Mary, and the seven sacraments in the light of Scripture. The very last sacrament we were willing to relinquish in the light of Scripture was the Holy Eucharist”, which seems particularly odd since Fulton Sheen, no slouch on matters of conversion and unconversion, once remarked that, as a rule, the first thing to go is one’s belief in the Real Presence.

Brewer’s mother, then in her sixties, was secretly baptized in a Protestant church, not telling him so he would not rush his decision. But when his stint with the Navy was up shortly thereafter, they packed their bags and took off for San Francisco, with hardly a fare-thee-well to his bishop. His next task, he said, was to determine what the ultimate religious authority might be. He found his authority in the Bible.

It was in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, which he joined because his mother already had, that Brewer met his future wife. Only after he and Ruth

were married and he had served as pastor of an Adventist church for some time did he discover that the writings of Ellen G. White, the founder of the sect, were to be considered as inspired as the Bible. That, he said, was too much to take, so he resigned his pastorship. (He did not explain how he could have been an Adventist minister and not have known the status of Mrs. White's writings, just as it must be the rare Mormon elder who does not know the Book of Mormon is placed on a par with Scripture.)

He and Ruth, with their young son, returned to San Diego, where he decided to begin an organization that would help Catholics convert to fundamentalism. "I felt there was a real need for a church that would bridge the gap between Catholicism and Protestantism. Many felt uncomfortable or afraid of Protestant churches, but being a former priest, I believed, would help them feel more comfortable in leaving their church. I understood their frustration, I had faced their questions, I had experienced the same difficult decision to leave." He never did establish his own church; Mission to Catholics is a traveling ministry. Each weekend Brewer speaks at one or more Protestant churches, almost all of them Baptist, and solicits both financial aid and recruits. The recruits are trained in the techniques of distributing tracts and adroitly avoiding tough questions. (They routinely fall back on the line "let me ask my pastor".) Each week thousands of tracts are mailed out.

Most are written by Brewer himself. Others bear the names of other former priests, such as Mark Pena; Anthony Pezzotta; and L. H. Lehmann, author of *Out of the Labyrinth*. Bob Jones, chancellor of Bob Jones University, has his name on one Mission to Catholics tract, *The Church of Rome in Perspective*. It is a reprint of an article he wrote for a magazine, *Faith for the Family*, distributed by his school, and is perhaps the most ill-tempered tract published by Mission to Catholics. Its invective, only occasionally matched in Brewer's own writings, which are pointed enough, makes one wonder about the temptations one must undergo in a ministry such as this.

Jones begins by saying, "Pope Paul VI, archpriest of Satan, a deceiver and an antichrist, has, like Judas, gone to his own place." The tract goes downhill from there. At one point Jones attempts to raise the level of discussion, if only momentarily, by citing a diary kept by Bernard Berenson, the famous art collector and critic (who was, by the way, an Episcopalian). Here is what Jones says:

A pope must be an opportunist, a tyrant, a hypocrite, and a deceiver or he cannot be a pope. Bernard Berenson, in his *Rumor and Reflection* (a sort of notebook which he kept while hiding from the Germans in the hills above Florence during the Second World War), tells about the death of an early twentieth-century pope as described by his personal physician. When they came to give him the last rites, the pope ordered the priest and acolytes from the room, crying, "Get out of here. The comedy is over."

The gist, then, is that some unidentified Pope, knowing his end was at hand, acknowledged that his office and religion were jokes and that he had lived a he. Compare what Jones gives with what Berenson actually wrote:

Yesterday a friend was here, a Roman of good family, closely related to the late Cardinal Vannutelli and thus in touch with the Vatican, He told me that soon after the death of Pope Benedict XV, his own father was dying. A priest was called in, but the father refused to see him. Thinking to comfort the son, the priest said: "Don't take it hard. Such things will happen nowadays. Why, the late Holy Father on his deathbed sent away the priests with: 'Off with you, the play is over' " (*la commedia efinita*). His Holiness surely meant *commedia* as *divina*, Divine

Comedy like the title of Dante's masterpiece.⁷

The problem is not just that Jones did not report the words accurately or that he attributed the story to the Pope's physician. The problem is that he did not know (or care) what the Pope was referring to when he said *la commedia efinita*. If Jones were to read the *Divine Comedy*, he would be sorely disappointed to find in it no guffaws or rib-tickling jokes, and the reason is that the word "comedy" is used in a much older sense than the one having to do with humor. Berenson was right to translate *la commedia efinita* as "the play is over". Another way to put it might be "the drama of my life is over", which is hardly the confession of duplicity Jones wishes us to think the Pope made.

To what extent has Bart Brewer allowed himself to become like some of the people with whom he rubs shoulders? In private discussions he is invariably polite, and in his writings and in public talks he professes love for individual Catholics, yet he collaborates with people such as Bob Jones, who is unable to make the same claim with a straight face. The influence of such people shows. *Challenger* contains innumerable misrepresentations of Catholic doctrines and history, and Brewer's penchant for them no doubt comes from his imprudence in his choice of accomplices, who care little about accuracy. Apparently he works on the principle that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, but that is courting danger. He should keep in mind C. S. Lewis' remark that when supping with the devil, one needs to use a long

spoon.⁸

Brewer has made the same mistake Loraine Boettner made when he wrote *Roman Catholicism*. Boettner relied heavily on professional anti-Catholics such as Lehmann, Charles Chiniquy (a nineteenth-century sensationalist every bit as reliable as Maria Monk), and Paul Blanshard. Now Blanshard, the chief anti-Catholic writer of a generation ago, was not even a Christian—in fact, he was a secular humanist—yet Boettner had no qualms about quarrying his work for rocks to throw at the Church. The claim of leading fundamentalists that their attacks on the Catholic religion are made out of love for individual Catholics loses much of its credibility because they are unwilling to decline the use of unfair tactics. One might say they are unwilling to wage a just war; they want to do battle, and they do not hesitate to use any weapon at hand, no matter how foul.

In a way, of course, this is good, since much of what they write unintentionally repels. It is difficult for an informed Catholic who studies anti-Catholic literature to refrain from saying, “Here, let *me* do it! I can present your case more convincingly than you can.” Still, there are the numbers. However ineptly the fundamentalist position may be expressed, it draws each year thousands of Catholics out of the Church, and it makes that many more workers for the anti-Catholic movement. No matter how many people shut their minds to fundamentalism because of excesses by fundamentalist writers, countless others embrace that form of Christianity because what they read convinces them of its truth. At the least, they find anti-Catholics writing about issues that seem to matter, that affect their salvation—issues usually ignored by Catholic writers and the diocesan press.

This may account for the popularity of *Challenger*. Typeset on a microcomputer, it is printed on a single sheet of paper folded once to make a four-page self-mailer. It carries no illustrations, other than an occasional reproduction of the cover of *Pilgrimage from Rome*. The front page is usually written by Brewer and features essays on topics such as “Catholics and the Bible”, “The Wealth of Rome”, “Biblical Christians Will Leave Romanism”, and “Is There a Mediatrix?” This is the preachy page.

The second page is always a testimonial from “another ex-Catholic for biblical Christianity”. Stories are given by men and women, young and old. They speak of rather sudden conversions—not generally as quick as the one on the Damascus Road, perhaps, but nothing remotely like the drawn-out process undergone by converts to Catholicism such as John Henry Newman,

Arnold Lunn, or, more recently, Sheldon Vanauken and Thomas Howard. Consider representative examples.

Joanne Diriam⁹ said she had visited the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. “I had been reading about the Pope being in South America. . . . All of a sudden, I could not understand why the ‘poor people’ had to support a church that was obviously extremely rich!. . . I knew that I could no longer be Catholic.” Her explanation makes one think of a story told by Fulton Sheen.¹⁰ He had been giving a retreat to priests, and one of the younger priests asked him during one of his talks why the Church did not liquidate its holdings, sell off the ornaments and artwork, and give everything to the poor. The young man was rather insistent, and he came up to Sheen later and made the same point. Sheen looked at him closely and asked, “How much did you steal?” “What?” was the reply. “How much did you steal?” repeated Sheen. Then the young priest told the truth. He had been stealing from the collection basket, and he justified his acts by saying the Church was too wealthy anyway and could afford the loss.

Joanne Diriam let the cat out of her bag in an aside, noting that when the Pope was in South America, “he had reprimanded those very poor people regarding birth control”. If Sheen were here, he would probably trace her conversion to her dislike of the Church’s position on contraception, her concern being not so much the foreign poor’s access to the pill, but her own. No one, he might say, could be so ignorant of the Church’s temporal condition that the discovery of the existence of a finely ornamented church would trigger an instantaneous conversion. Complaints about the alleged wealth of the Church are always excuses for something else.

Like the others who have decided to “tell all”, Norman Nichols¹¹ was raised a Catholic. When he was about thirty, his “born-again” Baptist roommate convinced him to visit a Baptist church. His landlady, also a Baptist, had been pushing him to go for some time, and he regularly told her no, but he felt he could not refuse his friend. He went and was so moved that he responded to the altar call. “I never did go back to the Roman Catholic Church.” This was a man who claimed to have been well instructed as a Catholic and who said he regularly practiced his religion.

Larry Wise¹² was twenty-eight when he converted. As a Catholic, he had never once read the Bible, but he did read Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*, and he watched Jack Van Impe on television. He decided to go on one of Van Impe’s Holy Land tours and while on it received an anti-Catholic

tract. When he returned home and went to Mass, “I saw the statues, I remembered the verses: ‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images’ (Ex. 20:4). Then I thought of the Rosary and remembered another verse: ‘For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim 2:5). As I sat watching the priest I remembered other verses: ‘A bishop (pastor) must be blameless, the husband of one wife. . . .’ (1 Tim, 3:1-5); ‘Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven’ (Matt. 23:9).” More verses came to mind (his short tour of the Holy Land apparently having been a cram course in New Testament memorization), and he quickly concluded that he “could no longer participate in a church where the teachings are so contrary to what the Bible teaches”. Like the others, he un-poped.

The third page of each *Challenger* the correspondence page, is devoted to short testimonials and notes of thanks.¹³ No names are given for the writers, only the states of residence. One writer complained that “this area has many wicked ways of life like drinking, dancing, and gambling. The priest usually takes part in these things and doesn’t tell the poor, uninformed people the truth.” Another said, “I have already won my boss and hopefully my brother in St. Louis with the tracts you sent.” A New Yorker wrote, “As of today I am no longer a Catholic. I have been reading the Bible for the last three years, and then a friend gave me *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*, [a tract] from your organization. I would like as many as possible to pass along.” Many people write about trying to convince their spouses or children to convert. One man, reporting success, said, “I was a Catholic for 45 years. My wife and five children have all been saved.” Another reported that “I am an ex-Catholic, now newly born-again, and am encountering much hostility from my family. I need a lot of prayers and help in ministering and witnessing to them.” Some report even bringing their aged parents into fundamentalism.

The fourth page of *Challenger* often sports an ad for *Pilgrimage from Rome* (“one copy: \$6.50; ten copies: \$44.00”) and a list of Brewer’s scheduled talks—one or two each weekend, others during the week, generally at Baptist churches. The list demonstrates that Brewer’s ministry extends across the country, even across the Atlantic—he undertook his first, extensive speaking tour of Europe in 1986. He is constantly on the move, preaching, for instance, at thirteen churches in New York State in one month.¹⁴

This last page of the newsletter also includes requests for prayers, usually

for financial assistance or for the conversion of some straggler. Not all the prayers have been answered in the way desired. In 1981 Mission to Catholics started a daily, fifteen-minute radio program called “Contend for the Faith”, with Brewer as the principal speaker. It was aired first on a station in San Diego, and there were plans to expand into other markets. In a much-ballyhooed campaign, subscribers to *Challenger* anted up ten thousand dollars to get the program started and were asked to pray for its expansion. But contributions from listeners could not meet costs, and the original kitty was quickly depleted. In short order the schedule was cut to Saturdays only. Even that was too expensive, and the program was finally, and quietly, canceled.

Challenger goes out, of course, mainly to committed fundamentalists, some of whom are themselves converts from Catholicism, some of whom are hereditary anti-Catholics. The publication keeps people informed about the work of the organization and provides them, over a period of years, with a fairly complete apologetics course, at least regarding anti-Catholicism.

It is not the newsletter, though, that convinces people to jump ship, to leave the Barque of Peter at fundamentalism’s siren call. That task is left to Mission to Catholics’ books and tapes, but mainly to its many tracts, dozens of them. They are divided into four groups: testimonies of former priests (including one by Brewer himself and one by Charles Chiniquy); testimonies of former nuns (such as *Ex-Nun Finds Peace with God*); testimonies of former Catholic laymen (the Bible being one woman’s *Passport to Freedom*); and miscellaneous tracts, most of them on particular Catholic doctrines or practices. Far and away the most popular tract, if encomiums printed in *Challenger* are any indication, is Brewer’s *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*. Nearly four thousand words of small type, it is the kind of screed that can confuse Catholics right out of the Church—and it has been quite successful in doing just that.

The first section is titled “The True Church”. It tries to demonstrate that it was not Peter but Christ who was the rock mentioned in Matthew 16:18. Brewer rests his argument on an examination of the Greek, a tactic that usually works when his Catholic reader knows no Greek and is not aware the first Gospel was composed in Aramaic, the language Christ spoke. In fact, the argument Brewer makes, if applied to the Aramaic and not just the Greek, actually backfires against him, but he does not let the reader in on that secret. The question of “what the Greek says” is frequently brought up by

fundamentalists. Anti-Catholics, who often know little Greek themselves, are able to make hay with it only because most Catholics know still less.

The next section is on the papacy. Brewer cites some titles given to the Pope, such as “Holy Father”, and, without giving any sources, some claims allegedly made by recent Popes, claims that, taken out of historical context and only a few words at a time, seem rather suspicious to those new to ecclesiastical history. He then lists a few verses of Scripture, such as “Call no one on earth your father” (Mt 23:9) and “Is there a God besides me?” (Is 44:8), the latter given to show, apparently, that the Pope is not divine.

Following this is a short consideration of the priesthood, consisting mainly of highly selective quotations from the Bible. The gist is that only Christ is a priest under the New Dispensation; the Catholic priesthood was foisted on the Church by Cyprian of Carthage and “was part of the merger of paganism with Christianity”. Naturally enough, no look at the priesthood is complete without an excoriation of the Mass.

The fundamentalist understanding, or misunderstanding, is that Catholics believe Christ dies anew at each Mass. This violates Hebrews 7:27, “He died once for all”, and half a dozen other verses in that book, says Brewer. Then he turns to the Real Presence, which he considers to be at best a real symbolism. Again the reader is given a short course in Greek. “When Jesus said, ‘This is my body’ or ‘blood’, He did not ‘change’ the substance, but was explaining that He is the one ‘represented’ by the passover bread and wine. Jesus did not say *touto gignetai*, this has become or is turned into, but *touto esti*, which can only mean this represents or stands for.”

This is a blunder. True, *touto gignetai* means “this has become”, and, true, the sacred text does not read *touto gignetai*, but which Catholic claimed it does? When it comes to the meaning of *touto esti*, which is indeed found in the text, Brewer has things backward. As any Greek dictionary will show, *esti* is simply the verb “to be”. It means “is”. It means “represents” only secondarily, just as “is” in English can mean “represents”, but usually does not. The plain, the literal, reading of *touto esti* is “this is”.¹⁵

Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics, having misapplied elementary Greek, then looks at confession, the sacrament of penance, and justification. The reader discovers that no man has been empowered by Christ to forgive sins: “Who can forgive sins, but only God?” (Mk 2:7). He also learns not to confess to a priest: “Repent. . . and pray to god” (Acts 8:22). Deprecated is the Church’s appeal to John 20:22-23: “Receive the Holy Spirit; when you

forgive men's sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound." Brewer makes the standard argument that this was not a grant of a power to forgive sins, but to preach repentance, even though that flies in the face of the plain words of the text and the understanding of all the early Fathers of the Church. When considering justification, he argues salvation by faith alone and quotes fourteen biblical verses to buttress his case, but conveniently makes no reference to James 2:24: "You see, then, that it takes deeds as well as faith if a man is to be justified. "This tract makes no effort, on this or any other topic, to present the Catholic side or to deal with the weaknesses in its own argument.

Then comes the juiciest part of the tract, a section labelled "Roman Catholic Inventions", a list of forty-four beliefs or customs supposedly borrowed from paganism or created *ex nihilo*. Each item includes an approximate date of first belief or use. The list was taken, without attribution, from the first chapter of Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*. Almost none of the forty-four items are mentioned in other tracts from *Mission to Catholics*. What the reader thus is left with, in most cases, is a short statement consisting of no more than eight or ten words—and, of course, an uneasy feeling. These "inventions" are given not to present the reader with a complete syllogism, but to leave him with suspicions. Pile up enough innuendos, and one has what appears to be a convincing case against the Church.

This list is partly reincarnated in another *Mission to Catholics* tract, *Can a Christian Remain a Roman Catholic?* The author, John Phillips, claims that "Rome did not arrive at its dogmatic positions hastily or lightly. She is the product of many centuries of gradual departure from the true faith of the Church found in the word of God." More than thirty of the other tract's "Catholic Inventions" are then reproduced. "This is Rome", says Phillips. "These are the dogmas we associate with Rome. They are un-scriptural. All of them are the very antithesis of New Testament doctrine."

One blind spot that afflicts all professional anti-Catholics is the difference between doctrines and practices. That Christ rose from the dead is a doctrine; that Catholics are to abstain from meat on Good Friday is a practice, a disciplinary measure only. There is nothing doctrinal about the latter: it is not a belief, but a custom, and it can be altered as circumstances warrant. It is one thing to allege that some of Christianity's original doctrines have been dropped and non-Christian doctrines adopted. That, if demonstrated, would

show the Catholic Church is defectible, that it is not really the institution founded by Christ. But to argue that the Catholic Church cannot be the one founded by him because, say, “priests began to assume distinctive robes in A.D. 500” is to rest one’s apologetics on a basic confusion. No one, not even a fundamentalist, can argue rationally that the Church today should appear, even in all outward respects, just like the Church of apostolic times. If fundamentalists were clear in their own minds about the distinction between doctrines and practices, they would not bother arguing about the latter, because they would realize the knife cuts both ways.

Even when it comes to purely doctrinal matters, they are confused. On the one hand they seem to think there could be no proper development of doctrines as Catholics understand the term, no deeper understanding of them as centuries pass. Frank Sheed noted that one cannot stop people from drawing true inferences from true doctrines.¹⁶ If “This is my body”, for instance, then certain things logically follow regarding the Eucharist. On the other hand, fundamentalists are not averse to their own brand of doctrinal development; they too believe things that are not found on the face of Scripture. There are peculiarly fundamentalist doctrines that find no warrant in Scripture and that should, by the fundamentalists’ own rationale, be thrown out. Such difficulties are never discussed in literature from organizations such as Mission to Catholics because they are not perceived to exist. Professional anti-Catholics take the fundamentalist position as a given, the Catholic position as a usurpation, and their chief concern is to undermine the latter, not to justify the former.

Chapter 4

Old-Time Religion, Old-Time Tactics

One might surmise a religious tract titled *From Voodooism and Roman Catholicism to the Living Saviour* would be written by George Bush, popularizer of voodoo economics. Not so. The author, Clarence Ismey, is a Haitian, a onetime Catholic and (simultaneously, he says) voodooist who was converted to fundamentalism through the persistence of an illiterate man who had memorized dozens of Bible verses and recited them, one after another, until Ismey's defenses were breached. It took only one day.

Ismey claims he was promptly ostracized by his family and moved to Port-Au-Prince, where he was befriended by other Protestants. He attended a fundamentalist seminary, where he decided he was called to minister to the hundred thousand Haitians living in New York City. There he works as an associate of the Conversion Center, one of the oldest anti-Catholic groups in the country.

The name of this organization is wonderfully neutral, giving no hint what people are supposed to convert from or to, but it does not take long to see that the sole purpose of the group is to transform Catholics into fundamentalists. This is clear from an examination of its price list. The three dozen tracts available for purchase have titles such as *The Confusion of the Popes*, *The Roman Catholic Bible Says*, *Roman Catholic Articles of Faith*, *Transubstantiation*, and *The Mass—Sacrifice or Sacrilege?* Books for sale include *Catholicism against Itself*, *You Can Lead Roman Catholics to Christ*, *Secrets of Romanism*, and *Letters to a Roman Catholic Priest*. Also on the list are perennial favorites such as *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, by Charles Chiniquy, whose nineteenth-century horror stories still sell; *The Two Babylons*, written in 1853 by Alexander Hislop, who claimed Catholicism arose from ancient Babylonian cults; and *Roman Catholicism*, by Loraine Boettner, godfather of the modern anti-Catholic movement.

The Conversion Center, which had its “international headquarters” (in fact, its only office) in Havertown, Pennsylvania, and is now located in Newtown

Square, was founded by the late Alex O. Dunlap, who, with four other onetime trustees, is said to be “at home with the Lord—Rev. 14:13”. The present head of the group is the Rev. Donald F. Maconaghie, who lists himself as acting director. A pithy description of the group is given on the masthead of each issue of its newsletter: “A fundamental Faith Mission, Home & Foreign, offering spiritual and temporal help to Roman Catholic priests, nuns, and ‘whosoever will’ ”, The ostensible targets of the Conversion Center’s ministrations are thus priests and religious, but most of the tracts and books end up being thrust into the hands of Catholic laymen.

On the whole, the Conversion Center seems to be a smaller operation than Mission to Catholics, but a reasonably influential one, since it makes some effort to concentrate its energies toward a subset of Catholics. Its principals must have some concern about continuity, though. Photographs of the annual meeting show a modest crowd in a small Baptist church, and the leaders of the organization, like a disproportionate number of people in the pews, are mainly elderly.

The Conversion Center’s newsletter, which appears irregularly and carries less copy than Mission to Catholics’ *Challenger*, offers some interesting viewpoints. The March 1984 issue, for instance, was devoted to the topic “Is Mary the ‘Mother of God’?” The author, as is usually the case, was Maconaghie. He starts this way: “After being practically beaten to death in the Republic of Ireland for preaching the Gospel,¹ I was made very sick in the hospital by being forced to listen to ‘prayers’ said by the nursing sister. Most of these prayers were to Mary, ‘the Mother of God’ ”.

Maconaghie says Mary cannot be the Mother of God because that would make her mother, Anne, the grandmother of God. “Likewise, James, the brother of our Lord, would be the brother of God. David would be the forefather of God.” The promoter of the notion of *Theotokos* (God-bearer) “was an unscrupulous bishop of Egypt, Cyril, who was promptly anathematized for his new and idolatrous doctrine by the most prominent bishop of his day, Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople”. At the Council of Ephesus, “Cyril ganged up on Nestorius, and by blackmail and bribery (fairly admitted in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*) the ‘Mother of God’ controversy was settled in favor of Cyril. Consequently Cyril has been pronounced a ‘saint’ and Nestorius a ‘heretic’.”

So where did this notion of *Theotokos* come from? asks Maconaghie. From Egypt, of course, where Isis, “the Egyptian madonna”, carried “her little ‘sun-

god', Horus, in her arms" and where "the worship of Seb, 'the father of the gods,' was supplanted by this 'mother-goddess' ". Get it? Isis was worshiped instead of Seb; Mary is worshiped instead of the Father.

(This issue of the newsletter ends, by the way, with a paragraph in praise of Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics International, with whom Maconaghie "had the joy of visiting Mexico and sharing the Gospel with the people there". In fact, several of the Conversion Center's tracts have been reprinted by Mission to Catholics under its own name.)

There are interesting reports given by Maconaghie in the following issue. Under a large headline reading "CONVERSION CENTER LEADER DEBATES THEOLOGIAN IN VATICAN" is a short article, most of which concerns a 1963 visit by Maconaghie to Rome. Then he says, "A few weeks ago I again visited Rome. This time I was invited by a high member of the Vatican Hierarchy. I entered with an official pass, duly issued by the Vatican bureaucracy. There in the 'Holy' See I debated point by point the doctrines of our precious Lord for four solid hours with a Vatican theologian."

That's it. From the headline one might imagine Maconaghie squaring off against Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, but he gives no hint concerning the identities of the "high member of the Vatican Hierarchy" who invited him or of the "Vatican theologian" with whom he "debated". He does say later that he had a long discussion with an archbishop. Is this the man who invited him, or the man he debated with, or did he merely exchange the usual courtesies with a visiting American prelate? The impression given the fundamentalist reader, no doubt, is that Maconaghie was in Rome doing what Hus or Luther did, putting the Vatican know-nothings in their places.

The August / September 1986 issue of the Conversion Center's newsletter features a peculiar "Dear Friend" letter from Maconaghie. It begins this way:

Cardinal Newman came perhaps the nearest of anyone in explaining how the Roman Catholic Church has so completely betrayed the message of the Christian Gospel. I think he was endeavouring to be as charitable as possible when he attributed the great betrayal to actual possession of the Church of Rome by an evil spirit. In his book *[An Essay on] The Development of Christian Doctrine* (page 6) he says, "The spirit of Rome has risen again in its former place, and has evidenced its identity by its works. It has possessed the church there planted as an evil spirit might seize the demoniacs of primitive times, and makes her speak words which are not her own. In the corrupt Papal System we have the very cruelty, the craft and the ambition of the Roman Republic, its cruelty in its unsparing sacrifice of the happiness and virtue of individuals to a phantom of public expediency, inks forced celibacy within, and its persecutions without; its craft in its falsehoods, its deceitful deeds and lying wonders; and its grasping ambition in the very structure of its policy, in its assumption of universal dominion: but it still claims the sovereignty under pretense. The Roman Catholic Church I will not blame, but pity—she is in

thralldom.”

Maconaghie continues by saying of Newman,

He masterfully enumerates the perversions that have resulted from this demoniacal possession very concisely as follows: “She virtually substitutes an external ritual for moral obedience, penance for penitence, confession for sorrow, profession for faith, the lips for the heart.” Cardinal Newman was, of course, only one of many religious leaders who has warned us of this evil which has possessed the corrupt Papal System. Among them are the founders of the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Lutheran churches [that is, John Wesley, John Knox, and Martin Luther].

The impression given by Maconaghie is that Newman, when a prince of the Church, condemned the “papal system”—and this in his most important book.

There are several things wrong with these quotations. For one thing, without letting the reader in on it, Maconaghie has dropped some phrases, added one word, and changed another word.² The meaning of the passages is changed slightly from what Newman actually wrote. His words are made to seem harsher than they were. This sleight of hand can be overlooked because it is minor compared to the real problem.

The real problem is that these words from Newman, which appear at the beginning of his book in what he labels an “Advertisement”, do *not* give his views at the time of writing. Quite the contrary. They are quotations from earlier writings, and he here specifically *retracts* them. He is saying these judgments, made when he was a Protestant, were *wrong*. Yet Maconaghie would have us think these are “Cardinal” Newman’s present opinions, the notions with which he went to his grave.

The passages being retracted were written in 1834, when Newman was thirty-three. As a young Anglican minister, he had been anti-Roman, as most in his circle were. But he learned much over the next eleven years, and when he wrote the “Advertisement”, which is dated October 6, 1845, he was convinced his earlier views were incorrect, that he had been operating from mere prejudice. In fact, just after Newman completed *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, he became a Catholic. He was, at his conversion, a layman—not a priest, certainly not a cardinal. He was not raised to the cardinalate until 1879, thirty-four years later.

So Maconaghie is triply wrong—wrong in the quotations, which he adulterates; wrong in their import, which he misrepresents; wrong in

Newman's status, which he misunderstands.

This is a good example of the way fundamentalist opponents of the Church bend facts to the snapping point. Little printed by professional anti-Catholics—those who make their living by attacking “Romanism”—can be taken at face value. The reader cannot assume blithely all is on the up and up. Nearly every paragraph requires an investigation, but who has time for that? Worse, how many suspect an investigation is even needed? Not many, of course, which is why writings like Maconaghie's do so much harm and, for the most part, go unchallenged.

A curious thing about the Conversion Center's newsletters is that most of the photographs of things Catholic are at least forty years old. Shown have been a priest giving an anointing in a hospital room where the patient's bed might have been used for those wounded at Verdun; another priest, in a grainy photo, celebrating a Tridentine Mass; Communion being given to servicemen wearing World War II uniforms; and a seminarian using a typewriter that Barry Fitzgerald might have brought to the set of his movies with Bing Crosby.³

The picture of the seminarian appears with the title “Seminarians Need Help!” The help needed, of course, is not the kind the Vatican might desire. Maconaghie prints portions of a letter from a young man studying—God knows why—for the priesthood: “Within a year I can be ordained a priest . . . but my convictions are against the Catholic church. In fact, I've come to know of the falsehood of the R.C. church. There are a lot of practices and beliefs in the R.C. church which are irrational, absurd, and unbiblical. To mention a few: infallibility of the pope, immaculate conception, Marian devotion and devotion to saints. . . . I feel that the Spirit of the Lord is leading me out of the Catholic church. I have been reading your esteemed publication and am convinced that the Baptist church is the true church of the Lord. Can I too become a Baptist pastor?”

In a sidebar is another letter. The name of the writer and his seminary have been deleted. He says, “I have been praying for the success of all your works for the propagation of the Gospel message. I feel that the Lord is calling me too, to join you and render humble service.” He then asks Maconaghie's help in getting admitted to a fundamentalist school of theology.

These letters sound so bizarre that they might be no more authentic than the Hitler diaries, but they are probably legitimate. Considering the state of seminaries today, there is no reason why incipient fundamentalists cannot be

found in them alongside incipient agnostics, though it does seem odd that young men convinced the Catholic Church is the Whore of Babylon, as the Conversion Center regularly states, would not leap from the fire at the first opportunity.

The newsletters are not the only bizarre things distributed by the Conversion Center. Some of its tracts are a bit odd. Consider one called *10 Reasons Why I Am Not a Roman Catholic*. The first point, given in full, reads like this:

1. THE PAPACY IS A HOAX. Peter never claimed to be pope. He was never in Rome. He knew that Jesus Christ, not himself, was the “Rock”. It is written, “Call no one on earth your Father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven” Mt 23:9.

How does one answer this? The effort required to respond to these four sentences is so disproportionate to their length—it would take several pages to give a complete answer⁴—that even people who know why these remarks are wrong would be tempted to find refuge in T. S. Eliot’s line: “What have we to do but stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards?”⁵ The temptation is to do nothing, to make no response, but that lets anti-Catholics win the skirmish by default. It must be admitted they enjoy a certain tactical (if short-term) advantage in that they can get away with presenting bare-bones claims such as these; they wear out Catholicism’s defenders by inundating them with short remarks that demand long explanations.

Other points in this tract are similarly terse. The next two are:

2. MARYOLATRY [*sic*] IS A HOAX. It is written of Christ, “Neither is there salvation in any other name. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” Acts 4:12.

3. PURGATORY IS A HOAX. It is a money-making scheme. It is written, “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from All sin” 1 John 1:7.

The penultimate point reveals that the tract is outdated:

9. I AM AN AMERICAN CITIZEN, and refuse to be the subject of a deluded Italian Prince. It is written, “No man can serve two masters” Mt 6:24.

The Conversion Center also distributes a card titled *10 Reasons Why I Drink*. It is the kind of thing one pulls out of a shirt pocket and offers along with a business card. The first of the ten reasons is, “I love to vomit.” The last reads, “It’s my way of obeying God, Who says, ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink is

raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.’ Proverbs 20:1.” The Conversion Center, like most fundamentalist groups, opposes the drinking of wine, no exceptions. No search of anti-Catholic writings, no matter how thorough, will reveal any discussion of the use of wine versus the misuse of wine. The drink Hilaire Belloc praised in his most famous poem is off limits for fundamentalists.⁶ This stricture puts even the casual reader of the Bible in an awkward spot, since Christ first displayed his miraculous powers by turning water into wine at Cana, and he used wine at the Last Supper. Surely he did not disapprove of its use, as distinguished from its abuse. Some fundamentalists try to explain away such awkwardness (by saying, for example, that the drink at the Last Supper was unfermented grape juice, not wine), but most simply ignore the problem. Far better to turn to more profitable endeavors—such as American history.

The Conversion Center publishes a small leaflet bearing Abraham Lincoln’s likeness. It is called *Lincoln’s Warning*. Credit is given to Charles Chiniquy’s *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*. The reader learns that Lincoln said: “The priests, the nuns and monks, who daily land on our shores under the pretext of teaching their religion. . . are nothing else than emissaries of the pope, to undermine our institutions . . . and prepare a reign of anarchy here as they have done in Ireland, in Spain, and wherever there are people that want to be free.”

Those who do not realize it was the Catholics of Ireland, rather than the English colonizers of Ireland, who initiated the trouble there can learn the sixteenth president thought “papists” a positive danger to the Republic: “Till lately I was in favor of the unlimited liberty of conscience, as our Constitution gives it to the Roman Catholics. But now it seems to me that, sooner or later, the people will be forced to put an amendment to that clause toward the papists. Is it right to give the privilege of citizenship to men who are the sworn and public enemies (No. 1) of our Constitution, our laws, our liberties, and our lives?. . . I am for liberty of conscience in its noblest, broadest, highest sense. But I cannot give liberty of conscience to the pope or his followers, the papists, so long as they tell me that their conscience orders them to burn my wife, strangle my children, and cut my throat when they find* the opportunity.” The asterisk refers to a footnote, which says “Lincoln was finally assassinated April 14, 1865, by Roman Catholics.”

If an experiment in historiography is in order, one might ask the people at the Conversion Center, who apparently believe Lincoln wrote these lines, just

where in his collected letters, speeches, or official documents they can be found. Lincoln was not one to make idle charges; if Catholics told him they were bound in conscience to burn his wife, strangle his children, and cut his throat, he no doubt left posterity details of just who informed him of this curious obligation. Searching his writings might be fruitless, though; the clue is that the expression “public enemy” came into vogue only in the 1920s.

Chapter 5

Bringing Catholics to Real Christianity

Although Bill Jackson's ministry, Christians Evangelizing Catholics, is small, he is in considerable demand on the fundamentalist lecture circuit, and the reports of his tours in his newsletter show that he puts on plenty of miles. He may speak in several states in a month, and in 1985 he even took his message to Ireland, where he spent seventeen years as a minister, and to England. The newsletter is sent from his San Jose, California, home to about eight hundred names, but the number belies Jackson's influence. Many of the names are of ministers or of leaders of similar organizations. Through one name might come a talk to hundreds of people, or a single acquaintance might arrange for Jackson to speak at several churches, multiplying his effectiveness.

Jackson shares with his readers news about his children and their spiritual maturation, asking, in one issue,¹ for prayers for his son Dave, who "has come back to the Lord" and who thinks "the Lord has other things He wants him to do with his life" than lay carpets, which Dave finds "physically difficult to continue". The other children are more established. Bill, Jr., and his wife live in New York City; Colleen and her family are in the San Joaquin Valley; and Mark is in Chicago, studying at the Moody Bible Institute, perhaps to join his father in convincing Catholics to leave the Church while there is still time. Also studying, readers are told, are "four Roman Catholics who have been saved through taking the 'Treasures in Your Catholic Bible' study course. . . .I met one of them recently, and he needs your prayer for his Roman Catholic wife." The study course is printed by Tabernacle Pres of Louisville, Kentucky, the firm that prints Jackson's tracts (twelve so far, soon more) and booklets (four), which he distributes "on a free will offering basis".

In his newsletter Jackson does more than recount his family's version of the Pilgrim's Progress, of course. He gives practical examples of what can be done by one person to bring Catholics into real Christianity. He called one article "Use Your Local Priest".² In it he explained that he at one time

worked with a telephone ministry organized by a Baptist church in San Francisco. “We used a business directory and made random calls to certain areas.” One night he called St. Mary’s Catholic Church. A layman answered, and Jackson asked him about “the assurance of salvation”. The layman, stumped, went for the priest. “Needless to say,” said Jackson, “the priest didn’t know anything more about salvation than the layman had, but, during our conversation, he specifically told me he did not have assurance of salvation. From that time on, whenever I telephoned a person who identified themselves *[sic]* as a Roman Catholic, I could say, ‘I talked to one of your priests the other day. He said he wasn’t sure of going to heaven, but my Bible says that we can know.’ I would then quote 1 John 5:13 and found this a very good way to initiate a gospel presentation.”

This can, indeed, be a good means to effect conversions. Another way is to march right up and accost a priest. “You might visit the priest and find him unwilling to talk, as a Baptist pastor and I experienced recently. When we knocked on his door and introduced ourselves, he said, ‘I am a busy person. No one gets to see me without an appointment. This is one of the rudest things I ever saw, your just coming here and expecting to talk to me.’ (These are not his verbatim words, but the jest *[sic]* of what he said to us.) If you run across this, excuse yourself politely and then call to make an appointment with him.”

Appointments can be revelatory; good use can be made of priestly ignorance thus exposed. “Sometimes the very lack of positive doctrinal standing by a priest can be used in evangelism. We often quote the priest we met last year in Dayton, who was very difficult to corner, but who finally joined a conversation we were having with a Catholic lady theologian. We asked him if the Bible was the word of God, if he was sure of salvation, if the Mass was a sacrifice—and all he could do was to uneasily shift from one foot to another and say, ‘I don’t know.’ ” Is it any wonder, with examples like these, that Jackson writes that “it has been said that an educated Catholic must cut off his head and leave it outside when he goes to church?” An irresolute priest invites precisely this kind of abuse.

Jackson calls himself not prolife but pro-eternal life. One of his tracts³ advises fundamentalist prolife workers to “realize your responsibility to the child you saved from abortion” by converting the parents to fundamentalism. “The greatest thing that can happen is for the mother to be evangelized and saved. Recently I met a young lady who, when unsaved, was planning an

abortion. She was contacted by Christians who persuaded her to keep her baby and who led her to the Lord. Later, the father was also saved. So instead of three lives—one wrecked, one murdered, and one unsaved—we have a Christian family with a positive testimony of God’s grace.” It is hard to fault Jackson’s logic here; he has, in this regard, a better appreciation of what is needed than do many Catholic proliferers who are satisfied just to halt abortions. However great a triumph it is to have one more life spared, stopping there is not enough. To do so is to ignore the deeper causes of the abortion mentality, which is necessarily a secularist and irreligious mentality.

Catholics, who for so many years carried on the prolife battle seemingly alone, now sometimes express annoyance that fundamentalists, who have more recently become active in the movement, seem unable to restrain themselves from evangelizing during strategy sessions. It is one thing, these Catholics think, to save babies, quite another to seek conversions among movement members. They would not be so annoyed if they perceived that the fundamentalists are perhaps being more consistent than they are and perhaps have a keener appreciation that abortion is as much a problem of the soul as a problem of the scalpel.

Aside from the newsletter, which preaches to the converted, Jackson produces tracts. One is titled *Is Roman Catholicism a Cult?* When Catholics think of cults, they think of the Hare Krishnas, the Moonies, the Scientologists. They find it hard to imagine that some Protestants think of the Catholic religion as a cult. But among fundamentalists, this is taken for granted and is a matter of keen concern. “Very likely”, Jackson writes, “this is the most often asked question when I minister regarding Roman Catholic evangelism.” Catholics are naturally offended at being called cultists, at least in the sense the fundamentalists mean to use the term.⁴

As in so many matters, fundamentalists and Catholics are at loggerheads because they define terms differently. Jackson explains fundamentalists’ peculiar definition: “The word, as generally used by the Lord’s people today, means some kind of false religion, especially one that denies the basic truths of Christianity. We may get a consensus of opinion [among fundamentalists] that would state a cult is a religion that does not believe in basic Christian truths and is always characterized by a denial of the uniqueness of biblical revelation and a salvation at least partially dependent on the works and merits of its adherents.” In other words, a cult is any religion that is not fundamentalism.

Granted, this is not a particularly helpful definition, but there is some sense to it. For the man who believes in fundamentalism, any other religion is necessarily erroneous. The Catholic Church adopts a similar perspective in acknowledging that every religion other than the Catholic is to some extent erroneous. But the Church differs in approach from fundamentalism in that it always (and not just since Vatican II) has been willing to acknowledge that other religions contain greater or lesser degrees of truth, depending on how much they mirror Catholicism. Eastern Orthodoxy is truer than, say, high-church Anglicanism, which is truer than Presbyterianism, which is truer than Unitarianism. Few fundamentalists are willing to be so generous. One is either a fundamentalist or damned, and, if damned, it does not much matter how close to heaven's gate one might be, because outside is still outside.

Jackson lumps the Catholic Church with the cults because "Roman Catholics have added to the Bible. They have no means of solid interpretation. Their present attitude toward its inerrancy is thoroughly liberal, and they have through the years been vocal in condemning God's Word. The Bible was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books—they will now tell you that was only because of erroneous Protestant translations—but it was first placed there in 1229, over 100 years before Wycliffe's first translation,"

These sentences contain some of the chief fundamentalist objections to Catholicism. Note that Jackson says the Church provides no means for "solid interpretation". At first this seems laughable coming from someone who dismisses any authority other than himself in interpreting Scripture. The individual is the least solid of all interpreters, which is precisely why Protestantism has been fissiparous. Jackson is more on target in saying the Catholic attitude toward inerrancy is "thoroughly liberal". This is his perception of the disarray in Catholic exegesis over the last twenty years. To him it appears the historico-critical method and its "assured results" are fully indicative of the official Catholic position on the Bible. Then he claims the Church had been "vocal in condemning God's Word" by placing the Bible on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1229. Of course, the Index was first printed in 1543, more than three centuries after that, but no matter. The gaffe is not entirely Jackson's fault. Here he was relying on Bart Brewer of Mission to Catholics, who made the same claim in one of his tracts, and Brewer in turn got the date from Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*, which gives no source for it.

Note the last phrase, “over 100 years before Wycliffe’s first translation”. This is not a gratuitous line, no idle reference or mere name dropping. Wycliffe is understood by most fundamentalists to have been the first to put Scripture into English.⁵ For them, the culmination of what Wycliffe is understood to have started is the King James Version. One will find in the case of many fundamentalists a reverence for that translation that approaches idolatry. There have been many fallings-out among fundamentalists because some will use only the King James Version, claiming that no other version is accurate, while others will adopt newer translations.

Jackson’s tract has other complaints about the Catholic Church. While attempting to suppress the Bible, the Church foists on Christianity things of her own fashioning, such as the doctrine of the Assumption. “The addition of blasphemous Tradition and changeable Papal teaching is as bad as looking for inspiration in [Mary Baker Eddy’s] *Science and Health*. . . or *The Book of Mormon*. It is difficult to come up with any modern definition of what is a cult and include Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and a host of others and omit the largest false religious system of all—Roman Catholicism.” Jackson says that “only as we see the system for what it really is can we fulfill our evangelistic responsibilities to the millions of souls lost therein—blinded by Satan and believing a lie. May we clearly define the system and truly love the people, and may God use us in Roman Catholic evangelism.”

Is Roman Catholicism a Cult? is a tract that appeals mainly to committed fundamentalists. It will sway few Catholics because its title is alienating, and its few paragraphs try to cover so many points that none is covered well. More effective, no doubt, has been Jackson’s tract *Charismatic Catholics*. It has been printed by Tabernacle Press for Jackson and reprinted by the Conversion Center and Mission to Catholics; it is a good example of the way anti-Catholics cooperate.

Catholic charismatics are a prime target for fundamentalists because they already have a keen appreciation of the Bible. They actually read it, which many “mainline” Catholics do not; non-charismatics are often immune to appeals to the Bible because they know little about it. Those familiar with Scripture, on the other hand, sometimes find themselves unable to counter arguments posed by fundamentalists, since their study of apologetics and theology has not kept pace with their study of the Bible. They accept the premise that any Christian truth should be demonstrable by appealing to the plain words of the text, and they are dismayed to discover there is no clear

mention of auricular confession, infant baptism, or the Immaculate Conception in any book from Matthew to Revelation. Thus many charismatics (non-Catholic as well as Catholic, of course) fall prey to fundamentalist blandishments, each blandishment coming in the form of a quotation from Scripture.

“A person who claims to be a born again Christian and remains in the Roman Catholic Church is ignorant, disobedient, or hypocritical”, concludes Jackson. One cannot stay in the Catholic Church and evangelize from within. God “told his people to come out of paganism and idolatry” (2 Cor 6:14-18). The answer? “It is essential that every true born again child of God separate from the church of Rome or any false system of religion and unite with a Bible believing fundamental Christian local church so that they *[sic]* can serve God in true obedience.” To the person impressed by concatenated biblical quotations (examples of which will be omitted here), this kind of argument is persuasive. Charismatics see that syllogisms of a sort can be constructed from Bible passages, and they surprisingly often act on the syllogisms—as do thousands of Catholics who disdain the charismatic approach to religion but who, like some of their charismatic brethren, have no ready intellectual defenses against fundamentalism. Most Catholics, of whatever stripe, are vulnerable to fundamentalist attacks.

Just as some of Jackson’s tracts are aimed at a wide audience, others are aimed at a select few. One is aimed directly at seminarians. It is entitled *Think: Should You Become a Priest?* This pocket-sized leaflet first quotes Pius XII and John XXIII about the paucity of vocations. The reader is told that “St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote eloquently about the duties and dignity of a priest.” Then focus shifts. To answer the question on the cover, “we must go to the Word of God and to your innermost heart”. This passage is given: “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, but this man (Jesus), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. . . . For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:11-12, 14). A sacrificing priesthood is therefore a superfluity, says Jackson. The Bible clearly says so. “Ceasing to trust a human priesthood for propitiation and absolution, and placing our trust in Jesus’ perfect work—this is salvation!” He makes no attempt, of course, to consider how the Catholic Church understands the verses he quotes. One problem with fundamentalists is that they think the points they bring up have never been considered by the

Church. It does not occur to them to find out what informed Catholics understand by a particular passage of Scripture. They find it incomprehensible that someone could have a conclusion that differs from theirs. In this regard their minds lack subtlety.

They generally admit that Catholics hold their beliefs in good faith, but they think they hold them in unalloyed ignorance, having no rational grounds for them at all. When mention is made of someone believing in “blind faith”, most people immediately think of stereotypic Bible thumpers, but Bible thumpers, as often as not, think immediately of Catholics. They think Catholics believe what they do either out of habit, having been brought up that way, or because they are under the influence of rapacious clerics, who keep them in intellectual bondage the better to mulct them. The Catholic religion is the opium of the people, say fundamentalists.

I Have Literally Bent Over Backwards

A generation ago the only one in the family who was well-known was Jerry Lee Lewis, who, with hits such as “Great Balls of Fire”, was at the top of the rock-and-roll charts. Jerry Lee long since disappeared from celebrity status, but the family still has someone at the top of the charts—the television rating charts, this time. It is Jerry Lee’s cousin, Jimmy Lee, better known as evangelist Jimmy Lee Swaggart,

“The Jimmy Swaggart Telecast” is seen by as many as three million Americans weekly. The ministry’s monthly magazine, *The Evangelist*, has about a million readers. Jimmy Swaggart is now as popular a television evangelist as Robert Schuller (of “Crystal Cathedral” fame), Oral Roberts, or Jerry Falwell, each of whom had a head start on him. Of the many television evangelists, great and small, it is Swaggart who is known for forthright anti-Catholicism.

An Assemblies of God minister, Swaggart bases his operations in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (which is “67% Catholic” and, he explains, “a little more superstitious, a little ‘more Catholic’ ” than the rest of the country).¹ There he has a \$30 million World Ministry Center, which includes the Jimmy Swaggart Bible College. It is in Baton Rouge that he tapes his programs and plans his crusades.²

For most of his career Swaggart has been indistinguishable from other television preachers. Only in the last few years has his anti-Catholicism become painfully noticeable, no doubt because anti-Catholicism has become fashionable. Like other trends, it has come out of the closet.

At first the objectionable comments were given over the air as infrequent *obiter dicta*. Listeners were told, for instance, that the Catholic Church killed fifty to sixty million people during the Dark Ages because they would not convert. “They cut your head off. They shot you through with an arrow. They tortured you to death”, Swaggart explained on one of his broadcasts. He said the Church had a law passed in 416 that made membership mandatory under

penalty of death, and he noted that “priests are just leading people to hell”. He decried “liturgical religious monstrosities” such as the Mass. Despite such remarks, much of his audience consists of Catholics.³

Things came to a head when Swaggart published “A Letter to My Catholic Friends” in the January 1983 issue of *The Evangelist*. The resulting brouhaha eventually died down, but Swaggart decided to stir things up once more after discovering that he had not lost all his support from Catholics and that many non-Catholics were pleased at what he had said. In July 1985 *The Evangelist* carried “the first in a series of articles [by Swaggart] which will, I hope, lay a scriptural foundation illuminating ‘the faith which was once delivered unto the saints’ (Jude 3)—and this same faith as interpreted within Roman Catholic teaching”. This series was in part a revision of the “Letter”, which had run to about a dozen pages, and the series was, in turn, revised into a book, *Catholicism & Christianity*.⁴

The Evangelist is a curious magazine, clearly centered about one man. Major articles are written by Swaggart or his wife, Frances. There are contributions by others, but they are usually secondary. In some issues, more pages are by the Swaggarts than by all other contributors combined. Consider the issue that inaugurated Swaggart’s series on Catholicism. The cover story was on “The New Evangelists: What Do They Preach?” In seven pages promoters of secular humanism were examined, including Bob Guccione, Hugh Hefner, Larry Flynt, Norman Lear, and Phil Donahue. The author: Jimmy Swaggart. Next was a question-and-answer column titled “Brother Swaggart, Here’s My Question”. (“Question: Is the Bible filled with inconsistencies, contradictions, and errors as some claim?”)

Next were some non-Swaggart pieces: one on prophecy, by Willard Cantelon, who “has met with world leaders in private and spent hours in personal interviews”; one on the afterlife, by David Wilkerson, author of *The Cross and the Switchblade*; an obituary; and two pages of news shorts. Then came the “Letters from Our Viewers” column, hosted by Frances Swaggart, and this was followed by a report on the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries’ charitable distributions overseas.

Jimmy Swaggart returned as author with “Christianity and Catholicism”; the accompanying photograph was of a gold crucifix at the end of a rosary. There followed a full-page advertisement encouraging readers to attend a Swaggart crusade; two pages on faith by C. M. Ward, a radio preacher for the Assemblies of God; and then another piece by Swaggart, “Startling Incidents

and Amazing Answers to Prayer”. (It is here one learned that “one of the nation’s major newspapers [unidentified] said just the other day, ‘Any time you see a Catholic church in Louisiana, you will also see a bar very close by.’ I think they were intending it as a compliment—which it certainly is not—but, basically, it is the truth.”)

Then came a request that the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries be mentioned in one’s will; a column on dating by the youth minister at the World Ministry Center; a first-person account of conversion by a Crow Indian; a two-page pitch for money by Frances Swaggart, who penned across the page, “Please let me bear [sic] my heart to you”; an advertisement for the *Jimmy Swaggart Giant Print Commentary Bible* (“The Best \$60 Investment You Could Ever Make!”); an open letter by Swaggart to the Assemblies of God on the eve of that denomination’s general council; and “From Me to You”, in which Swaggart prefaced his comments with “I believe God has spoken these words to me”. The last few pages of the magazine hawked cassettes, records, and booklets by Swaggart, the latter having titles such as *The Council of Jerusalem*, *Questions and Answers: Volume 4*, and *The Unpardonable Sin*.

No doubt about it: this is not a small operation. It is so large now, so successful, so moneyed, that Swaggart can chance alienating his Catholic viewers and readers by moving from the hard sell to the harder sell. In “A Letter to My Catholic Friends”, he put it this way: “I try never to pull any punches. I believe that if we are to truly serve our Lord, we must face all issues honestly and up-front. There have been times when I’ve made Catholics angry through statements I’ve made, but what I’ve said has always been said in love. Because I love them, I will tell them the truth.” Swaggart accepts that many Catholics have been born again; he thinks they fail to act on their rebirth if they remain in the Catholic Church. His “Letter” was intended to give them reasons to leave.

The “Letter” begins by noting that the Church “basically teaches that only those who are *in* the Catholic church will be saved”. This is of course true, although not in the Feeneyite sense. Fundamentalists do not object to such a claim—which amounts to saying that the Catholic Church is the only one founded by Christ—merely because it is some religion other than theirs that claims to be the Way. Their objection is that Catholics say an institution, a “system”, is necessary for salvation, “Bible Christians” often use the term religion in a derogatory, not in a theological or sociological, sense. Their meaning is not the dictionary’s, which defines religion as the recognition on

the part of man of a superhuman, controlling power deserving obedience and worship. By religion fundamentalists mean a complex, rule-laden, man-made, even casuistical scheme for effecting salvation on one's own.

Swaggart continues by saying that "Catholic tradition [which he nowhere defines] suggests that . . . Mary—not Jesus—is the mediator between God and man. There is little clear-cut distinction between God the Father and Jesus in the mind of most Catholics; hence, their tendency to think of *either* the Father or the Son as 'the Christ'." Catholics are thus Modalists—or perhaps Patri-passians who think the Father suffered on the Cross.

The reader learns, for instance, that "It was not long ago that the Catholic church *burned people at the stake*—by the tens of thousands—for *reading the Bible*! Only a generation ago Catholics were *forbidden* to read the Bible, the position being that if there were anything important in there the priest would tell the common people about it." The emphasis is Swaggart's, as is the notion that priests could not tell their parishioners much about the Bible because they read only a truncated version of it known as the breviary. "The Catholic church's doctrines are made up basically of legendary, mythical, apocryphal, human traditions—rather than being based on the Word of God." In fact, Catholicism is "a *false religion*. It is not a Christian religion, and it is *emphatically* not the 'church of Christ on earth' as it claims to be."

From generalities to specifics. The next topic is the papacy. Swaggart makes the same argument other fundamentalists make. He looks to the Greek text of Matthew 16:18-19 and argues that since Peter and the rock are referred to by two slightly different Greek words, the rock cannot be Peter but must be Christ. He makes no reference to the gender of Greek nouns or to the Aramaic language, which Christ spoke, which uses the word *kepha* in each place, so the passage reads: "Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my church", just as in modern French the phrasing would be: "Thou art *Pierre*, and upon this *pierre* I will build my church." Reference to the Greek text is regularly made by fundamentalists when arguing with Catholics; it will be considered in a later chapter. For now it is enough to note this is an argument every Catholic needs to master, because every Catholic will find himself facing fundamentalists who try to impress him with their superficial, and largely mistaken, knowledge of Greek.⁵

After explaining that the power of the keys was nothing more than the power, or "right", to be the first to preach the Resurrection on Pentecost, not the wider power believed by Catholics to be held by the papacy, Swaggart

notes that “Peter would have been ineligible to be a Pope as he was married”. Surprisingly enough—or perhaps not so surprisingly, considering their lack of familiarity with the Bible—many Catholics are upset by this revelation. They think it is a telling point against the legitimacy of the papacy, since they have never heard that Popes or bishops or priests might at one time have been permitted to be married, just as few of them know that even today priests in the Eastern rites may be married. Swaggart himself might be disappointed to learn that a good number of early Popes, not just Peter, were not celibate. He might be especially disappointed to learn that this has always been acknowledged by Catholic historians and that no Catholic apologist has ever thought the fact argued against the existence of the papacy, for the very good reason that clerical celibacy, at whatever level, is a discipline, not a doctrine.

If Swaggart’s argument regarding Peter’s marital status does not clinch the matter, the next point does. He says “there isn’t a shred of literary, historical, archaeological, or scriptural evidence that Peter went to Rome or was ever in Rome. The Bible makes no mention of Peter being in Rome, and Paul, in his letter *from* Rome, never mentioned Peter being there. . . . There isn’t one word in secular history supporting the Catholic contention that Peter lived in Rome.” Swaggart is not just wrong here, but ignorant.

If it is archaeological evidence he wants, he can turn to John Evangelist Walsh’s *The Bones of St. Peter*,⁶ which recounts in detail the excavations under the high altar of St. Peter’s Basilica. If he wants literary or historical proof, he can turn to a reference work such as William A. Jurgens’ *The Faith of the Early Fathers*,⁷ which quotes sixteen passages from early Christian writers attesting to Peter’s being in Rome and dying there. In fact, we have more sources citing Peter’s presence in Rome than we have affirming Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon.

Apparently Swaggart has never read the Fathers of the Church or any historian such as Eusebius, and there is scant evidence of any familiarity with archaeology or ancient literature. He knows little about the “literary, historical, or archaeological evidence” in the matter. The only evidence he has is the fourth on his list, scriptural evidence, and that is the only evidence most fundamentalists will consider in a matter such as this, even when the Bible is incompetent to decide the issue.

Fundamentalists’ reverence for the word of God is often so extreme that it becomes distorted, and they think the Bible should be the last word on any matter occurring between the start of Christ’s public ministry and the close of

the first century. It does not occur to them that other works may shed light on happenings of the period. What is more, they do not perceive that we can gain considerable insight regarding the proper interpretation of the Bible if we discover how the earliest Christians understood it.

Swaggart ends his discourse on the nonexistence of the papacy by saying, “Catholic tradition says that Peter was the first Pope. Who, then, was the second one?” Granted, one will not find the second Pope named as such in the Bible, but his name is listed in any encyclopedia. He was Linus, as a few moments’ research would have shown Swaggart, who made no effort to look at even plainly secular sources (forget Catholic sources) in developing his critique of Catholicism. His main source was, as it is for most anti-Catholic fundamentalists, Loraine Boettner’s *Roman Catholicism*.

From the papacy Swaggart moves on to the standard objection that the Church violates 1 Timothy 4:1-3 because priestly celibacy amounts to the “forbidding to marry” that Paul complains about, and from there he goes to Matthew 23:9 (“call no man on earth your father”) to demonstrate that the priesthood does not really exist because priests are called “Father”. Then it is to the Mass, where the reader is told that “it is *barbaric* to even insinuate that He has to be crucified again and again”. Of course, it is Swaggart who does the insinuating, since no Catholic thinks Christ dies anew at each Mass.

In peroration, it is back to Mary, who turns out to have had other children since Jesus was called her “first-born” (Mt 1:25)—Swaggart being wholly ignorant of the meaning of the term under the Mosaic law—and whose own mother cannot have been named Anne since “there is no hint, either in secular history or the Bible” of such a person, an example of Swaggart’s unfamiliarity with the apocryphal gospels.

Swaggart’s end is in his beginning, “As I close I want to say, as I’ve said previously in this article, that the Catholic organization is not a Christian organization. Its claims are false; it is a false religion. It is not the Christian plan of salvation, nor the Christian way. Whosoever follows its errant doctrines will be deceived and end up eternally lost.” He reassures the annoyed by saying that “every statement in this article is *fact* based on Scripture and historical record. It is not the ranting of someone blindly opposed to something as a matter *of opinion*.” And he really believes that. As uninformed and misinformed as Swaggart is, he is no Jack Chick or Tony Alamo. He does not try to deceive. He thinks he is giving the whole story, and his facts, such as they are, are taken mainly from sources he trusts.

Encouraged by the response to his articles in *The Evangelist*, Swaggart published in 1986 *Catholicism & Christianity*, an attractively bound hardback described on the dust jacket as a “powerful new book [that] examines each of the basic tenets of Catholicism and compares them against the standards and precepts of the Word of God”. In fact, it is not as complete as Loraine Boettner’s *Roman Catholicism* (it has half as many pages and a third as much text). This is not to say that Boettner’s book is complete in the sense of being scholarly or of taking into account Catholic rejoinders to his claims, but Boettner considers more topics, and always at greater length, than does Swaggart. No, *Catholicism & Christianity* will not replace *Roman Catholicism* as the main handbook for professional anti-Catholics, but it may reach more folks in the pews and have a greater effect in the long run.

Swaggart’s book recapitulates his magazine series; indeed, much of it is lifted word for word from *The Evangelist*. Since the book had, in a way, a trial run, the ubiquity of its blunders, non sequiturs, and contradictions is surprising. If criticisms of the magazine series were proffered, whether by Catholics or fundamentalists, they apparently were not incorporated into the manuscript of the book.

Start with a modest error. On the dust jacket and in the introduction,⁸ Swaggart says there are “over 600 million Roman Catholics” in the world. But in his concluding chapter he says “there are nearly 800 million nominal Catholics in the world”.⁹ Feeling charitable, one might say this is just an example of poor proofreading, but the next error cannot be.

In referring to the Assumption, Swaggart says: “Oddly enough, this mystical belief had been a peripheral precept [*sic*] within the Catholic church since the Middle Ages, but was only given official certification in 1950.”¹⁰ In other words, the doctrine had been believed, even if not officially defined, for maybe eight hundred years. Elsewhere he refers to “Mary being *suddenly* taken bodily into heaven. (We say ‘suddenly’ because no one knew about Mary’s physical ‘translation’ before it was unexpectedly announced by the Vatican in 1950.)”¹¹

Swaggart asserts that transubstantiation “is, without question, one of the most absurd doctrines ever imposed on a trusting public”,¹² though he does not venture to say how such an absurdity can be believed by millions of people who, demonstrably, are neither fools nor knaves. He repeats the common notion that the doctrine “was first formulated by Paschasius Radbertus, Abbot of Corbey, at the beginning of the ninth century”.¹³ His

confusion about the Eucharist is exemplified by his belief that the chief eucharistic feast is “Holy Thursday, or the Feast of Corpus Christi”.¹⁴

Discussing the duty to confess at least once annually, which only applies to those in mortal sin, Swaggart claims that “even though a person had not sinned during the year, he would still be consigned to eternal hellfire—simply because he had not ‘reported in’ to the priest during the year.”¹⁵ He asks, “How many political figures, public servants, judges, and men of high and important positions are held in bondage because of intimate secrets revealed to their priests? The most personal facts of every Catholic family, of every Catholic heart (which should be known only to God) are known by priests in their most intimate details.”¹⁶

Swaggart thinks the title “pope” means “universal bishop”, that “inquisition” translates as “torture”, that an indulgence is “a permit for indulging in sin”, that Paul said bishops had to be married (did they cease being bishops when they became widowers?), that the Rosary was “copied from the Hindus and Muhammadans [*sic*]”, that “by tradition was meant human opinions”, that the Bible was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1229 (the Index was instituted in 1543, and no authentic Bible was ever put on it). These are just a few of the blunders appearing on only five pages.¹⁷

Swaggart notes that “in this book on Catholic tradition, I have literally bent over backwards to ensure that every statement is true”.¹⁸ His contortions do not seem to have helped much, perhaps because he relied on few sources other than his imagination and bitter ex-Catholics. His bibliography consists of only fifteen works, some of which he apparently did not use at all in writing his book.¹⁹ In *Catholicism & Christianity* there are dozens of quotations—largely from anti-Catholics, but also from ancient Catholic writers, even from papal encyclicals—yet page numbers are given only twice,²⁰ and usually the titles of books from which quotations are taken are not given. Often the writer’s name is withheld (or not known), as when Swaggart introduces a quotation with the words “one Catholic stated”.²¹

The truth is that Swaggart does not know what pages or books or authors the quotations he uses came from (presuming they are legitimate quotations in the first place), because he never read the quoted works. He lifted the quotations from the writings of other anti-Catholics, who failed to give citations in *their* books. “My information has come primarily from former

Catholic priests”, he admits,²² He refers to Bart Brewer’s *Pilgrimage from Rome* and Clark Butterfield’s *Night Journey from Rome to the New Jerusalem*, hardly books from which one could expect to learn much about Catholic beliefs or history. (It may give one a feel for the reliability of these works to know that Brewer’s was published by Bob Jones University Press and Butterfield’s is distributed by the Antichrist Information Center, which is run by Alberto Rivera, the hero of Jack Chick’s comic book *Alberto*.)

If Swaggart “bent over backwards”, literally or otherwise, there is scant evidence of it. His book is a fine example of the danger of mixing a little knowledge with considerable prejudice. If he were less prejudiced—that is, less inclined to accept blindly every unflattering thing said about the Catholic Church—and more knowledgeable, Jimmy Swaggart would be embarrassed that his name is on such a travesty, because he is not really a bad man, just a man badly misinformed.

No one would mistake him for an academician; he does not lie awake at night wondering whether he did his homework. What he is is famous, influential, and effective. He is even, according to Barbara Nauer, who heads the Catholic Writer and Artist Guild, a nice man—and she has some grounds to say that, since she considers Jimmy and Frances Swaggart her friends and once spent three hours “yelling at and pounding the table” with the man. (She is mentioned, but not by name, in *Catholicism & Christianity*.)²³ “Swaggart’s irk with Catholicism seems to rise from thoroughly honorable motives”, she says. “Swaggart’s bias against Catholicism, given his fervid Protestantism, is in no way unreasonable. Swaggart seems ready to like *Catholics*.” The task for Catholics is to “stop wringing their hands about Swaggart and start educating him about the true Church”. The same should be done for less-famous fundamentalists. If Catholics will not do that, “we *deserve* to live with his horsewhippings”.²⁴

Bill Jackson’s Christians Evangelizing Catholics is a one-man ministry unknown to most Catholics, even to most fundamentalists. By contrast, Jimmy Swaggart’s name is recognized even by people who have never watched his program. Where Jackson works with at most thousands of dollars, Swaggart has tens of millions. In a year Jackson might speak to a few thousand people; on any Sunday Swaggart speaks to thousands of thousands.

Yet there are few Jimmy Swaggarts. The number of television evangelists is small, and there are few radio preachers who have syndicated programs. But there are hundreds of fundamentalists who host radio or television

programs that are broadcast over just one station, and there are thousands who have ministries along the lines of Jackson's. While most of these operations are restricted to one town or one section of a town (Jackson's is geographically large as such things go), they have a cumulative impact far greater than Swaggart's because there are so many of them.

The demographics are unavailable, but of Swaggart's three million American viewers, surely only a few hundred thousand are Catholics. (Other stars of religious television would enjoy higher proportions since their anti-Catholicism is muted.) Even Swaggart's Catholic viewers will be more influenced by the evangelist that comes to the door than by the evangelist heard on television. Most Catholics who meet fundamentalism meet it at the local level, and, if they are convinced by its arguments, they are convinced because they have spoken directly with local fundamentalists who have taken them through the Bible and various tracts.

The most important thing about Swaggart's ministry so far as Catholics are concerned—what makes it as influential as it is—is that it legitimizes anti-Catholicism and emboldens local fundamentalists to knock on Catholic doors. They normally would not take such a step without considerable prodding. On the whole, fundamentalists are reserved, wary of talking about religion outside their own circles, and until recent years they largely kept to themselves. But Swaggart and the other media preachers are exemplars. Their apparent success in taking on the Roman institution (which gives no audible answer to their charges) encourages the people who gather for Bible study each week at Good Book Baptist.

Chapter 7

Appealing to the Young

Anti-Catholic fundamentalists are not necessarily old fogies. Exhibit number one: the late Keith Green, popular religious singer who was killed in a plane crash. His *Last Days Newsletter*, published by his Last Days Ministries of Lindale, Texas, carried four installments of the *Catholic Chronicles*, each “edited and compiled by Keith Green”. These issues of the newsletter were so well received that they were reprinted in 1980 and 1981 in the form of tracts. The tracts found a wide audience. Though no longer available from Last Days Ministries,¹ they remain influential and deserve mention.

Give them their due. They are simply the best-looking tracts put out by either side in the fundamentalist-Catholic squabble. The typography is clean, almost booklike (italics, bold, reduced footnotes), there is original artwork, and the printing is in two colors, making for black text, red headlines, and a pink background. Not unjustifiably, the outfit that ran the presses is called Pretty Good Printing.

Somewhat surprisingly, the first tract is on the Holy Eucharist; it is subtitled “Eating the Flesh of Deity”. Green explains to his readers why he avoids “the more obvious departures from biblical foundation—such as the worship of and prayers to the Virgin Mary, the infallibility of the pope, purgatory and prayers for the dead. . . .” They will be discussed later, he says. “But for this first article I believe that we should get right to the root” of Catholic worship, and that is the Eucharist. He at least knows what the opposition’s core devotional belief is.

There follows a reasonably fair explication of Catholic doctrines, although it is laced with smart asides and an abundance of exclamation points. Green gives extensive quotations from the canons of Trent, getting in his jabs by prefacing his account with biblical verses such as “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” (Ex 20:4), the point being, of course, that the host is a graven image. He then comments on those scriptural passages Catholics use in proof of the Eucharist, and he makes the standard argument that the Greek

in Mt 26:26 (“This is my body. . .”) can only mean the bread “represents”, “signifies”, or “stands for” Christ. He admits the Greek phrase is *touto esti*, and he says it means “this is” (which is true), but he insists, contrary to any Greek grammar book, that the verb can only be taken in the symbolic sense.

Regarding this and all the other topics he considers, his arguments are unoriginal. He even concludes this tract with a few paragraphs on the “real” origin of the Eucharist. Like Ralph Woodrow—perhaps because he read Woodrow’s *Babylon Mystery Religion*—Green finds the Eucharist prefigured in the worship of Osiris and in Mithraism.

The attack is stepped up in the second of the *Catholic Chronicles*. This one is on the Mass and is subtitled *Jesus Dies Again*. Those with good eyesight will catch the footnote on the first page, where credit is given to one of Bart Brewer’s tracts, another example of the way anti-Catholic fundamentalists rely on and quote one another.

On the inside is a reproduction of a Gustav Doré drawing of the Crucifixion. The text is again unoriginal so far as Green’s arguments are concerned, but he differs from other fundamentalist writers in that he quotes Catholic sources. Canons of Trent are given, as are passages from Vatican II and some lines from a booklet distributed by the Knights of Columbus’ Catholic Information Service.

Green sees the falsity of the Mass in its apparent violation of Christ’s words that “It is finished” (Jn 19:30). Not distinguishing between Christ’s death and his sacrifice, he says in the Mass Christ dies anew, and thus Catholics think his task was not finished at all. Green is unable to perceive that the sacrifice can be perpetuated (presented again) even though the death occurred once. There follow four selections from Hebrews, each, to Green, attesting to the contradiction between what the Mass purports to be and what the Bible says. “Once for all” (Heb 10:10) is the banner fundamentalists wave. Christ died once, so Catholics, who think he dies again at each Mass, aren’t really Christians, but cultists.

To establish the Catholic Church as nothing but a cult, Green presents the third tract in his series, *Salvation According to Rome*, The largest tract (11 by 17 inches, folded to make four pages) and the longest (about 4,000 words), it was surely not the work of a single evening at the typewriter. It is a formidable piece of paper—not in the sense of the soundness of the arguments, but in their intensity, their seeming thoroughness, their ability to impress the theologically uneducated (which is to say just about everyone in

the pews, whether fundamentalist or Catholic).

Green's comparison is between "salvation by grace", which implies an absolute assurance of salvation, and the Catholic sacramental system. He begins by deriding the Catholic distinction between mortal and venial sins, saying "there is in fact no such thing as a venial sin. All sin is mortal! It is true that some sins are worse than others, but it is also true that all sins if not forgiven bring death to the soul." He talismanically quotes Scripture: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23); "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek 18:4); but overlooks 1 John 5:17: "Not all sin is fatal."

This is a good example of a common failing among fundamentalists, and not just those who are actively anti-Catholic. They memorize their lessons well, but they memorize selectively because they are taught only certain things. Although they read the entire Bible, with, naturally enough, special emphasis on the New Testament, verses that do not mesh with what their pastors have told them are either skipped or just not perceived as being trouble spots. On any one topic, they learn verses that, concatenated, seem to prove conclusively their position, and it is on these that they concentrate their apologetics. Few of them seriously ponder the meaning of those large chunks of the Bible that are pushed into the background. It is the rare fundamentalist who will go verse by verse through Scripture, seeing if he can piece together a coherent whole. In fact, most ex-fundamentalists say their first doubts about fundamentalism came when they read a biblical passage for the hundredth time and suddenly realized that it did not square with what they'd been taught at Sunday school.

Convinced, in the first place, that the Bible is easy to understand, and convinced that all its parts admit but one interpretation and that anyone interpreting differently must be acting in bad faith, they had given no thought to the possibility that the Catholic position might have something in its favor. The Bible must, unless the reader is not a Christian at all, lead him to but one interpretation, which happens to be identical with that of his fundamentalist pastor. There is no point in looking elsewhere.

Though they held this view, these onetime fundamentalists could not entirely escape the plain words of the text. First this, then that verse would bother them. They would read that "not all sin is fatal" and wonder, not whether sin is to be divided between mortal and venial (even ex-Catholic fundamentalists generally have no feel for those terms), but, more simply, how that verse could be reconciled with apparently contradictory ones. Their

teachers' technique of selective quotation (which they believed was not selective, but exhaustive) kept them in line, but the number of these discomfiting passages grew, and eventually a critical mass was reached.

In *Witness*, Whittaker Chambers explained that the communist, before his break with that ideology, one night wakes up in a cold sweat, convinced he is hearing screams. What he hears is his subconscious—and perhaps his conscience—finally piecing together stray fragments, and he realizes what communism really is. He can Caste its reality. On one level he in fact always has known, or at least for a long time known, what it is, but his prejudice has kept the implications of that knowledge submerged. Then he hears screams.²

It is somewhat the same with the fundamentalist before his conversion to another brand of Christianity. For a long time he has gathered these ill-fitting verses, “pondering them in his heart”. From their existence he has drawn no conclusion, trusting that at length he will be shown just how they fit into his creed, until, seemingly out of the blue, it occurs to him that fundamentalism may be fundamentally wrong.

But this is getting ahead of the story. It is enough to note here that Keith Green's tracts are fine examples of the best small-compass, anti-Catholic writing by fundamentalists. He uses all the standard techniques, all the pat phrases, and he uses them convincingly—or so it must seem, since the tracts have enjoyed a considerable success, particularly among the young who used to listen to his songs.

The fourth of the *Catholic Chronicles* asks, *What Did Vatican II Really Change?* The answer: nothing. It is a favorite ploy of fundamentalists to say that the Church made a big production out of changing itself, bringing things up to date, telling the world it was sloughing off its old prejudices and needless doctrinal encumbrances, when in fact all the essentials remain the same. It was all a public relations gambit, designed to elicit sympathy for a Church in decline. And it worked. Most people have been fooled, but not the fundamentalists.

Some of this, of course, is quite true. There have been changes since the Council, but there has been no alteration at all in basic doctrines or in principles of operation. The Catholic Church is still the sole true Church (it is in the Catholic Church that Christ's Church “subsists”, according to Vatican II),³ and, while Friday abstinence may no longer be required, the Church has not abandoned the principle that religious authority may legislate on matters of discipline and devotion,

Green quotes at length from Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*. Boettner, called by Green a "noted Evangelical authority on Roman Catholic doctrine", looks at Vatican II and sadly concludes that "an infallible church simply cannot repent". Rome will always be Rome, and Vatican II changed nothing of importance. The Catholic Church has scraped off its barnacles and is ready to take to the seas again. This enemy of truth may be more seaworthy now than it was a generation ago. "The agelong danger that Protestantism has faced from the Roman Church has not diminished", cautions Boettner; "in fact, it may well have increased."⁴ Like Queen Victoria, he is not amused, nor is Keith Green, nor, one supposes, are the impressionable readers of the *Catholic Chronicles*.

From Texas and the home of Last Days Ministries the focus shifts to New York, where we find another organization that appeals largely to the young, Solid Rock Ministries. It mails out, at irregular intervals, a newsletter that carries, below the mailing label, the line "Jesus is coming back soon,. . . Are you ready?" According to the head of the organization, Donald Spitz, among those who should not feel comfortable in answering that question are Catholics, for the simple reason that Catholics, if they remain Catholics, are damned.

One issue of the newsletter opens with two revelations granted Spitz (they read like the pedestrian stuff some Catholic visionaries claim to have been told), then it goes on to warn of one of Satan's favorite tricks, religion. "Another of his favorite lies is to make you 'religious'. He'll keep you entangled in rituals, sacraments, ceremonies, and other 'traditions of men' that have been manufactured into doctrines."

The reader is not surprised to discover, a few pages further along, a letter from a young woman who explains, as an ex-Catholic, that she knows Solid Rock Ministries is "persecuted and maligned because of the stand [it has] taken opposing the false doctrines of Catholicism". She then recounts her childhood upbringing and the discovery, as a teenager, that "despite my fear of God and my strongly held moral beliefs, I was more prone to do evil than good. Countless penances did not improve my sinful disposition", and she says she ended near despair. She was invited repeatedly to a Bible study, but regularly declined. At last, her resistance gone, she decided to go. "I intended to teach those 'born again fanatics', those 'Jesus freaks', a lesson in Catholicism." She was surprised to discover they were studying not a catechism, but the Gospel according to John. (What did she expect at a

Protestant Bible study?)

“As the sweetness of the Word of God gently rolled over my ‘sin tired’ senses, I found that I was unable to criticize the teaching of the Word”—perhaps because, as a Catholic, she had never been introduced to the study of the Bible and was in no position to raise even the simplest objections to odd interpretations of it. In six months, after attending the classes weekly, she was “born again”. She tried attending Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and her soul “was filled with rage when I realized the damnable crime that was being committed against God and against millions of sincere, yet spiritually blinded people”. It is these people, these Catholics, that she and the people at Solid Rock Ministries mean to reach. They aim mainly at the young.

Her letter is followed by an article on “Cults and More Cults”. The author is Spitz. After perfunctory mention of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons, he gets right to the point. The real enemy is the Catholic Church. His arguments are unexceptional and are not worth reproducing at length. One story of his must suffice. “One day at Mass [this was before he unpoped] I remember the priest reading from the Gospel of Matthew, about not using vain repetitions in prayer. I thought to myself, ‘That’s very beautiful, and also really makes sense.’ No sooner was the reading completed when the service continued on with some ‘canned prayers’ repeated numerous times, followed by a sermon on the ‘Joys of the Rosary’ ”. He closes by noting, with Loraine Boettner and others, that Vatican II really changed nothing of substance. Indeed, he even refers to *Unam Sanctam* and says it is still a fair indicator of the Catholic position (true enough, if understood properly). As Spitz puts it, the bull, issued by Boniface VIII, said “submission to the authority of the Pope is a requirement for salvation”. The Catholic Church is out to get us all.

Chapter 8

At the Fringe

“There has been a multi-million dollar campaign made through the media to convince people that I am a bigoted, anti-Catholic, hate-literature publisher”, wrote Jack Chick in the introduction to *Smokescreens*.¹ “And do you know something? They have been very effective in convincing people that this is what I am,”

Apparently they have, whoever “they” are, because Jack Chick is generally regarded as the king of the anti-Catholic publishers. He has received more attention in the Catholic press since 1980 than all other professional anti-Catholics combined, and his rantings against the Church have inspired even Protestant publications, such as *Christianity Today*, to investigate his operation. His ideas are so perverse, his hate mongering so outlandish, that even some anti-Catholics shun him. If the average Catholic has heard anything about the recent revival of anti-Catholic prejudice, he has heard about Jack Chick.

Because of all the publicity, two things have happened. Chick and his chief assistant, Alberto Rivera (who claims to be a onetime Jesuit and bishop), have been given a prominence in the anti-Catholic movement they in fact do not have, their writings seeming to be more influential than they really are, and other anti-Catholic organizations—the ones that produce the converts to fundamentalism—have been ignored. It may be that in some Catholic publications Chick and Rivera have received more column inches than anyone other than the Pope. And they simply have not been worth it, because their barks are far out of proportion to their bites. They make good copy but few converts and nowhere near the converts one would expect from all the fireworks.

The other problem is that coverage of them has meant coverage of other anti-Catholic organizations has been shallow. While full-page articles have been devoted to Chick Publications’ comics, in most Catholic papers only passing comments have been given to the organizations that really have been

dragging Catholics out of the Church and into fundamentalism. Chick and Rivera have thrown something of a shadow across the fundamentalist landscape, and it is sometimes hard to realize there are other groups lurking in the bushes. One reason for this is that Chick has sought publicity as though he were running for office, while most professional anti-Catholics quietly go about their work, making no effort to grab headlines. They want converts, not notoriety. To seek the public eye is to put oneself on the spot.

It is one thing to make strange claims about the Catholic religion, but something else to find yourself having to support the claims with facts and rational arguments, which you might have to do if you shout too loudly. So most fundamentalists are reserved. They push their ideas, but avoid confrontations that force them to debate. Only when they think they are up against ill-informed papists (and no one else) do they open their satchels, drag out a Bible, and ask, “How does *this* square with what the Catholic Church says?” But Chick does not worry about having his arguments fall flat because he does not argue. He just, well, pontificates and then ignores challenges to fight.

None of this means Chick is not worth covering. He is. His colorful comic books and pocket-sized tracts have been widely distributed, and some Catholics, particularly impressionable teenagers and young adults, have accepted his notions and left the Barque of Peter at the first port of call. But most people influenced by Chick have been opposed to Catholicism all along and never gave any allegiance to Rome. Chick’s materials merely heighten their native bigotry and give them the satisfaction of knowing that their prejudices are, in some circles, socially acceptable. After all, here is someone much more prejudiced than they, someone who has achieved a measure of notoriety, someone who has put the enemy on the defensive, and he seems to be doing quite well, thank you.

Chick’s literature would be unimportant, quite unworthy of the sustained treatment it has received in the Catholic press, if his were the only anti-Catholic organization in the nation. There are few flat-Earthers, and no one pays them much heed. They would be worth examining, perhaps, if there were societies of oval-Earthers who received legitimacy because they could separate themselves in the public mind from those who think the world is shaped like a fat dish. Chick’s very existence makes all the other anti-Catholic groups look moderate, and they are therefore more influential than they otherwise would be. Fundamentalists who are squeamish about

supporting all of Chick's theories owe him a vote of thanks; he makes them look good.

It is similar to the big lie technique. Most people, even most with an ingrained prejudice against the Church, realize the comic books are grotesqueries. They seem to say, "We acknowledge Jack Chick is overzealous; we admit that. But his zealotry only demonstrates that what Mission to Catholics, the Conversion Center, and Jimmy Swaggart say must be accurate. These other evangelists have eliminated Chick's infelicities, and what we are left with is the unvarnished truth." It is this kind of thinking that makes Chick's work important.

He first gained notoriety with the publication of the comic book *Alberto* in 1979. This is Alberto Rivera's story—or so it is claimed. The thirty-two pages are well illustrated, in the style of Marvel Comics. The drawings are detailed, even explicit, making no effort to leave the reader wondering. The story begins in Spain in 1942. The first few pages recount the last hours of Alberto's mother. The young Alberto is shown at her deathbed. The priest in attendance tells him "your mother has not only received the sacraments, but special indulgences by the pope, our Holy Father". It thus should be an easy death, but not so. The next box shows her last moments. She sees "horrible monsters, coming at me!!" Hands raised to keep the visions at bay, she cries, "Don't you see them? They want to put me in fire! They want to get me, Alberto! I don't want to die and go there!" But, of course, she does die, and she does go there, even though we are told her family knew she was a saint. "To my knowledge," said her husband, "she never missed going to Mass." Alberto, not comforted by the priest, thinks that "It's all a lie! The sacraments didn't help my mother. . . . The Church didn't help her when she needed help and comfort." Despite his disillusionment, Alberto becomes a priest.

We next see him, now "Dr." Alberto Rivera, in San Diego in 1979, mysteriously run off the freeway by some enemy, he finds temporary refuge through a friend and begins to recount his story, beginning with the true nature of the Church. The tale is familiar to anyone who has read Maria Monk's revelations. In Spain, for instance, convents and monasteries are connected by tunnels; along the passages are chambers where the bodies of illicitly conceived (and quickly murdered) infants are buried. The Pope does not actually run the Church; the real ruler is the Jesuit General. The tortures of the Inquisition are recounted in glorious, dripping color. And so forth.

Rivera was trained from youth, he says, to infiltrate and subvert

Protestantism. The denominations assigned to him were the Plymouth Brethren, Pentecostal, Baptist, and United Evangelical. He was fabulously successful and was rewarded by secretly being made a bishop. His credentials are demonstrated through a photograph of what purports to be an identification card issued him by the Spanish government. His photograph (he is wearing a Roman collar) seems to have been superimposed over the card. The reader is also shown “a copy of the last official certification given to me just before I left Spain in 1967”. Investigations by *Christianity Today*² and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights³ confirmed that neither the Diocese of Madrid, where Rivera claims to have been a priest, nor the Jesuits have any record of him, but what can one expect from papist conspirators?

Alberto was followed by *Double-Cross*, a recounting of Rivera’s further exploits, particularly the rescue of his sister from the clutches of rapacious nuns (her escape from the convent seems to have been modeled closely on Maria Monk’s) and Rivera’s flight from hit squads sent after him by the Vatican. The reader is regaled with a photograph of Kathryn Kuhlman meeting Paul VI and a drawing of Jimmy Carter meeting John Paul II. These well-known Christians were in cahoots with Rome. And so was someone else—Jim Jones turns out to have been a Jesuit who did himself in, along with his followers, in fulfillment of his Jesuit oath.

Later additions to the Chick Publications library include *The Godfathers*, which demonstrates that the Catholic Church is the “Mother of Abominations” referred to in Revelation 17; *The Force*, “a prophetic study revealing the occult side of the Whore of Revelation”; and *The Big Betrayal*, based on Charles Chiniquy’s *50 Years in the Church of Rome*, which demonstrates that the Church arranged Abraham Lincoln’s assassination. If something meatier than comics is wanted, the reader can turn to Chick Publications’ illustrated catalogue and order books such as *The Two Babylons*, another nineteenth-century potboiler; *Night Journey from Rome to the New Jerusalem*, by Clark Butterfield, allegedly an ex-priest; *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, by longtime Catholic-baiter Avro Manhattan; or even *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, which “boldly exposes the Vatican’s involvement in world politics, intrigues, and the fomenting of wars throughout history”.

Then there is *Smokescreens*. This ninety-three-pager is actually a transcript of a cassette the author made. He markets it by saying that the reader gets not

only the words of the cassette, but revealing photographs as well. “What you are going to read in this book is absolutely devastating.” He explains that “we believe at Chick Publications that the Whore of Revelation is the Roman Catholic Institution”,⁴ and he names such Protestant lights as Luther, Calvin, Knox, and, in more recent years, Moody and Spurgeon as agreeing with this conclusion. The title of the book comes from the smokescreens the Jesuits have set to make people think the Whore of Revelation is something that will come in the distant future, not something that is present today and headquartered in the Vatican.

There follow several short chapters: one on “The Wafer-God”, another looking at the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, a third on the way Croatian Catholics supposedly backed the Nazis, Then come chapters on the application of Revelation 17 to the Church, the way Catholics have secretly gained influence through the television shows of supposedly Protestant evangelists, and the Vatican’s long-term plans for conquest.

Next comes self-congratulation. Chick explains how brave he was to publish Alberto Rivera’s story. “When it finally dawned on me that we were being set up for another inquisition, I realized what a mess I’d be in if I sounded the alarm and the Christians wouldn’t believe it, I could lose our business, our reputation and friends. If I printed Alberto’s story, I would be going into a battle that would jeopardize my family and my own life.” But he knew what to do. “I went before the Lord in prayer and the thing I dreaded came to pass. I asked the Lord if I should attack the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Should I attack the Vatican? The Lord said yes. And so we published *Alberto*.” Although he followed the Lord’s explicit directions, Chick didn’t get the backing he expected from other fundamentalists. He said of one, “Here is a man I used to pray for. But no longer. The Lord stopped me”—the same Lord, apparently, who instructed his followers to love their enemies, even their former accomplices. “When the heat came on Chick Publications for what we were doing, I was amazed. It all came through the same group. There seemed to be a link between all these men who are promoting the story that Alberto is a fraud.” He cites the stories in *Christianity Today*, *Cornerstone* (a magazine appealing to young evangelicals), and *Our Sunday Visitor*.⁵

Then he demonstrates there is no honor among professional anti-Catholics. He attacks Bill Jackson of Christians Evangelizing Catholics and Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics. “Both of these men are supposed to be

operating ministries to Catholics. And yet, they're going around to churches trying to destroy our credibility." Well, not quite. Brewer, for instance, noted in his newsletter, *Challenger*, that he has been asked often about Alberto Rivera's credibility, and he would neither support nor disavow either Rivera or Jack Chick. On this matter he took the agnostic position.

After Jack Chick got the publicity he so ardently sought, he had to go it alone. Not entirely alone, perhaps, for he still had Alberto Rivera, who could tell him about the "blueprint for Catholic America", something he was briefed on when a Jesuit. It went all the way back to the time of the Pilgrims. Remember those people leaving Europe for America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, seeking religious freedom, people such as the Pilgrims? All Protestants? Hardly. Among them were numerous papists from England, Ireland, and France, "These were plants", Rivera told Chick. "The Jesuits made sure this part of our history was erased and removed." Once the fifth column was in place, its task was to "destroy or control all the Christian schools across America. Throughout the years, Jesuits, working undercover, have gotten into special committees on school boards to remove the emphasis on the Bible and replace it with psychology as found in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola." They transformed public schools into Ignatian retreats. After the schools came the judiciary, then politics, then the military and newspapers. "Even back in the time of Lincoln over half the newspapers in the United States were controlled by the Vatican."⁶

Chick asked Rivera, "How Catholic is our military position?"

"Horrifying", said Rivera.

"I then asked about the political picture."

"It is even worse."

"Then I said: What about the Catholic structure of the judiciary?"

"It is very painful because of the heavy Jesuit penetration of this area", said Rivera.

"Is this preparing the way for the coming inquisition?" asked Chick.

"That's correct", replied Rivera. "First for anarchy. We were briefed that after all these years of penetration and infiltration, what was needed was riots and anarchy in order to finally take over. By the time the Roman Catholic Institution is ready to take over politically, militarily, educationally, and religiously, that means they will have some legal basis to do so."

Is there any hope? wondered Chick. Yes, said Rivera, but only if Chick Publications' materials are distributed even more widely. The United States,

conveniently enough, is where the prophecies of the Last Days will be fulfilled, and the ground has to be prepared. “If it were not for the publications we printed, we would be in a different situation today.”⁷

Time grows short. Protestant pastors have to be on guard; all the worst things they have heard about Catholics are true. Those are Catholic eyes staring at them in the night. “I was recently told”, recounts Chick, “that in 1949 an ex-Jesuit priest told a Rev. Eubanks in California that when the Vatican takes control of the United States, every pastor and his family will be shot in the head.”⁸ And if that is not convincing, what is? What further proof is needed, save perhaps the name of the ex-Jesuit, the full name of Rev. Eubanks, and the name of the man who recently told all this to Chick? It should be enough to know that “the Jesuits, the Illuminati, the Opus Dei, and the Masons”⁹ are the real makers of smokescreens. One need only keep his eyes open.

Many Catholics have been doing just that, keeping them open and on Jack Chick and Alberto Rivera. The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has reported on Chick Publications since at least 1981, and *Our Sunday Visitor* and *The National Catholic Register* have run articles, short and long, about the duo. Chick no doubt has made a tidy sum in distributing his dozens of comics, books, and tracts. Rivera is in some small demand as a speaker and no doubt finds it profitable to play on fears of uninformed Protestants. He operates what he calls the Antichrist Information Center and is available for public talks.

Although most anti-Catholic organizations will not have anything to do with Jack Chick, Chick Publications, or Alberto Rivera, there is one that will. End Time Books, part of the Holy Alamo Christian Church, Consecrated, offers for sale the cassette version of *Smokescreens*. Also for sale are other books advertised by Chick: Edmond Paris’ *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, Avro Manhattan’s *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, and Charles Chiniquy’s *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*.

Tony Alamo is best known for distributing a poster claiming all the major news media “are secretly owned by the Vatican”. At the top of the poster is a large-print “Warning!” It is revealed that in Romanist hands are *Life*, *People*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, three television networks, the Hearst newspaper chain, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, “and many other local newspapers, T.V. and radio stations”. It seems the Vatican uses these media “to exonerate themselves [*sic*] from crimes they [*sic*] have done and are doing . . . and to

smear and malign who they *[sic]* will”. At the bottom of the poster is a big “Watch out!!”

The poster and the considerable publicity it received were the first most people had heard about what was originally called the Tony & Susan Alamo Christian Foundation, which began as a Christian street ministry in Southern California. It was established by Tony Alamo, a former pop singer, and his wife, Susan. The Alamos moved their operation to Alma, Arkansas, where they built an empire of unrelated businesses. Their holdings even included the largest country-and-western clothing store in Nashville. Members of the Alamo cult worked in its enterprises as “volunteers”, thereby allowing Alamo to amass millions.

Susan Alamo died in 1982. Tony was convinced she would be resurrected in short order, and faithful cultists kept round-the-clock vigils, convinced their prayers would bring her back. Just about the time his followers might have begun doubting the likelihood of his wife’s imminent return, Alamo hit on a new angle, anti-Catholicism. It was in early 1984 that his posters appeared in at least fifty cities around the country, and not long after came *The Pope’s Secrets*, an eight-page, closely spaced explanation of the Vatican’s shenanigans. In that booklet the reader learns that a conveniently dead Australian archbishop said “the demands of the holy father (the Pope) are that the public services should be 100% Roman Catholic soon. Care must be taken that no suspicion may be raised when Roman Catholics are secretly given more government jobs than Protestants, Jews, and other heretics.” This revelation is followed by quotations from Chick Publications’ books.

Next comes a history lesson. After World War II, explains Alamo, the Vatican set up the John Birch Society so the American public would become concerned about communism and would overlook the Vatican’s encroachments. The Vatican likewise underwrote “every major terrorist group in the world. The reason for this is to keep people’s thoughts on unexplainable, insane tragedies that their *[sic]* terrorist groups are committing while the Vatican is busy undermining all the governments of the world so they *[sic]* can have world dominion (papal power). When terrorist news hits, it is so shocking that it minimizes the news of the Vatican taking away the U.S. Constitution and of people being deprived of their religious freedoms.” Alamo does not explain how there can be any news of these Catholic usurpations if the Vatican controls the media—but that is a quibble.

There is no reason to recount each of the tales in this flyer. The author

demonstrates an active imagination, one that takes him far beyond what even Alberto Rivera has been able to concoct. Rivera, for instance, was unable to discover the “liquor and wine slave labor camps” run by the Christian Brothers and other religious orders that “unlawfully use free labor (thousands of Roman Catholic monks)”.

In 1985 Tony Alamo remarried. Since it would have been inappropriate for his organization to have continued carrying his former wife’s name, the group is now known as the Holy Alamo Christian Church, Consecrated. (Its literature does not make clear whether the adjective “Holy” is meant to modify “Alamo” or “Church”.)

In a tract called *It Was All a Lie!* the second Mrs. Alamo, Elizabeth, assures the reader that “you can find out all about ‘them’: the Roman Catholic cult, the harlot of Revelation,. . . and about how God has told throughout the entirety of the King James Version of the Holy Bible about her, *as well as her falling*, immediately before the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth.”

She explains that “I understand *now* why the Inquisitions and the Crusades were minimized in history classes, why propaganda was supposedly only a ‘Russian tactic’ and why Latin was the mandatory language in junior high school. The conversations I had overheard about Catholicism as a child were absolute truth. The Catholic motto of Satan is obvious—confuse, convince, convert.

If there is any anti-Catholic propaganda that needs to be ignored rather than opposed, it is Tony Alamo’s. His efforts are so extreme they make extremists look moderate. So why not ignore him entirely? Because, like Alberto Rivera and his comic books, this is another example of a fanatic making run-of-the-mill anti-Catholics look good. The public is always willing to accept someone or some organization that appeals to its unrespectable prejudices if it can, at the same time, reject propagandists at the fringe. Alamo may have hornswoggled enough people to work for him for free that he is now a wealthy man, but he really has no substantial following, nor do his ideas.

The work of Chick, Rivera, and Alamo as point men of fundamentalist anti-Catholicism legitimizes Mission to Catholics, the Conversion Center, and the other “moderate” anti-Catholic organizations. The three have allowed the groups that effect conversions to appear reasonable and respectable by distancing themselves from their foolishness. “Moderate” anti-Catholics are

seen as making the necessary distinctions, as thinking the questions through carefully—which is nonsense, but convenient nonsense.

With the election of John F. Kennedy, pundits said nativism was on the wane. The anti-Catholicism that had been a part of America's heritage from the first—and that at times supplicated into political movements such as the Know-Nothings in the 1850s and the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s—was gone, done in by the wisdom of the electorate, and it would not return. But it has returned, in a more virulent strain than has been seen in more than two generations. There have been at least two main causes.

First, fundamentalism itself is having an upsurge. Largely dormant since the Scopes Trial, it has grown rapidly in the last twenty years, partly as a reaction to liberal Protestantism. If liberal Protestantism, as represented by the “mainline” churches, has as its symbol the question mark, fundamentalism has as its symbol the exclamation point. It is attractive because it stands for something, and that something is definite.

The apparent weakness of Catholicism is the second reason the anti-Catholic element in fundamentalism is growing. When Kennedy was elected, few thought of the Church as anything but monolithic. It had come through” the milder anti-Catholic movement of the 1920s with nary a scratch, and in doing so it had confirmed the status of Catholics, who as recently as fifty years before that were, mainly, unwelcome newcomers to America. But the attack on the Church in the 1920s, spearheaded by the Klan (which concentrated its efforts on the Church as represented by immigrants, not on blacks), fizzled because the Church was perceived as being too strong; it seemed to be a fight not worth entering. Not so in recent years. Even fundamentalists who may touch no literature other than the Bible sense the Catholic Church has had problems, and many of them have been led to believe the problems are insurmountable and, in fact, are indicative of its ultimate collapse. They think Catholicism's true nature is finally catching up with it. Like wild dogs that attack only injured prey, professional anti-Catholics have gone after the Church because they sense irresolution. The old Church too easily survived attacks such as theirs. They think they can get away with something now, and they are running hard.

Examples of fundamentalism's darkest side could be repeated without end. There is no need to examine dusty books or yellowed leaflets to find them. They exist in numbers that were unimaginable only a few years ago. For the most part, Catholics have little notion of the depth of anti-Catholic sentiment.

The most fanatic of the anti-Catholics—people such as Chick, Rivera, and Alamo—work on a different level than do garden-variety fundamentalists. The latter do what they do because they seek the truth. They are willing to follow syllogisms to their conclusions, even though they have uncritically followed some badly premised syllogisms to get where they are. They think they have discovered religious truth, and what they have discovered impels them to share it with others and to do whatever is necessary to make others see what they see. Often they take liberties with the facts, although usually they are unconscious of doing so. To them, their arguments seem conclusive. They can discover no weaknesses—although, to be sure, they have not searched particularly hard for any.

They are like political radicals. They have isolated a problem (their own sinfulness, in the case of fundamentalists; society's, in the case of radicals) and are determined to effect a solution. In doing that they will have to remove obstacles that stand in their way. For radicals, the main obstacle has been America itself; for fundamentalists, it is the Catholic Church, an even tougher nut to crack. Radicals willingly put aside other concerns and devote their time to the Cause; it is expected of them. They are defined by their pursuit of what they perceive to be justice. Fundamentalists are equally committed, but they often find themselves doing what others would expect them not to do. Everything about them speaks of reticence, yet they attack what they believe to be the most nefarious institution in the world, certainly the longest lived. Those who cannot fight Rome publicly read about, listen to, and send contributions to those who can.

Few fundamentalists are up in arms about Methodism, Episcopalianism, or Lutheranism, but every fundamentalist is worried about the Catholic Church. His interest first might be piqued by one or more of the fanatics, or he might become aware of the problem by hearing a more respectable fundamentalist preacher or by being given a newsletter from a ministry devoted to saving Catholics from certain doom. He comes to understand it is the Catholic Church that is the embodiment of eschatological evil. His attitude might be one of unadorned hatred—this seems to be ever more popular, or at least ever more public—or it might be a quiet, gentlemanly dislike. In either case, he has put the Catholic Church in a category no other religion or movement can occupy.

If he is a former Catholic, he brings with him all the intellectual and emotional baggage that implies. That often means he will be a fiercer anti-

Catholic than the person brought up as a fundamentalist, perhaps because he feels he has more to atone for, perhaps because he blames the Church for his own failings. Regardless, he fears it as a tool of powers the average Catholic is only dimly aware of, and he considers himself duty bound to help those still in the clutches of Rome.

Chapter 9

Inspiration of the Bible

The Reformers said the Bible is the sole source of religious truth, and its understanding must be found by looking only at the words of the text. No outside authority may impose an interpretation, and no outside authority, such as the Church, has been established by Christ as an arbiter.¹ As heirs of the Reformers, fundamentalists work on the basis of *sola scriptura*,² and they advance this notion at every opportunity. One might think it would be easy for them to explain why they believe this principle.

Yet there is perhaps no greater frustration, in dealing with fundamentalists, than in trying to pin them down on why the Bible should be taken as a rule of faith at all, let alone as the sole rule of faith. It all reduces to the question of why fundamentalists accept the Bible as inspired, because the Bible can be taken as a rule of faith only if it is first held to be inspired and thus inerrant.

Now this is a problem that does not keep most Christians awake at night. Most have never given it any serious thought. To the extent they believe in the Bible, they believe in it because they operate in a milieu that is, if post-Christian in many ways, still steeped in Christian ways of thought and presuppositions. A lukewarm Christian who would not give the slightest credence to the Koran would think twice about casting aspersions on the Bible. It has a certain official status for him, even if he cannot explain it. One might say he accepts the Bible as inspired (whatever that may mean for him) for some “cultural” reason, but that, of course, is hardly a sufficient reason, since on such a basis the Koran rightly would be considered inspired in a Moslem country.

Similarly, it is hardly enough to say that one’s family has always believed in the Bible, “and that’s good enough for me”. It may indeed be good enough for the person disinclined to think, and one should not disparage a simple faith, even if held for an ultimately weak reason, but mere custom cannot establish the inspiration of the Bible.

Some fundamentalists say they believe the Bible is inspired because it is

“inspirational”, but that is a word with a double meaning. On the one hand, if used in the strict theological sense, it clearly begs the question, which is: How do we know the Bible is inspired, that is, “written” by God, but through human authors? And if “inspirational” means nothing more than “inspiring” or “moving”, then someone with a deficient poetic sense might think the works of a poetaster are inspired.

Parts of the Bible, including several whole books of the Old Testament, cannot be called “inspirational” in this sense in the least, unless one works on the principle of the elderly woman who was soothed every time she heard “the blessed word Mesopotamia”.³ One betrays no disrespect in admitting that some parts of the Bible are as dry as military statistics—indeed, some parts *are* nothing but military statistics—and there is little there that can move the emotions.

So, it is not enough to believe in the inspiration of the Bible merely out of culture or habit, nor is it enough to believe in its inspiration because it is a beautifully written or emotion-stirring book. There are other religious books, and even some plainly secular ones, that outscore most of the Bible when it comes to fine prose or poetry.

What about the Bible’s own claim to inspiration? There are not many places where such a claim is made even tangentially, and most books in the Old and New Testaments make no such claim at all. In fact, no New Testament writer seemed to be aware that he was writing under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, with the exception of the author of Revelation. Besides, even if every biblical book began with the phrase “the following is an inspired book”, such phrases would prove nothing. The Koran claims to be inspired, as does the Book of Mormon, as do the holy books of various Eastern religions. Even the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, claim inspiration. The mere claim of inspiration is insufficient to establish a book’s bona fides.

These tests failing, most fundamentalists fall back on the notion that “the Holy Spirit tells me the Bible is inspired”, an exercise in subjectivism that is akin to their claim that the Holy Spirit guides them in interpreting the text. For example, the anonymous author of *How Can I Understand the Bible?* a booklet distributed by the Radio Bible Class, lists twelve rules for Bible study. The first is “seek the help of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been given to illumine the Scriptures and make them alive to you as you study them. Yield to his enlightenment.” If one takes this as meaning that anyone asking

for a proper interpretation will be given one by God—and that is exactly how many fundamentalists understand the assistance of the Holy Spirit to work—then the multiplicity of interpretations, even among fundamentalists, should give people a gnawing sense that the Holy Spirit has not been doing his job very effectively.

Most fundamentalists do not say, in so many words, that the Holy Spirit has spoken to them directly, assuring them of the inspiration of the Bible. They do not phrase it like that. Rather, in reading the Bible they are “convicted” that it is the word of God, they get a positive “feeling” that it is inspired, and that’s that—which often reduces their acceptance of the Bible to culture or habit. No matter how it is looked at, the fundamentalist’s position is not one that is rigorously reasoned to. It must be the rare fundamentalist who, even for sake of argument, first approaches the Bible as though it is not inspired and then, on reading it, syllogistically concludes it is. In fact, fundamentalists begin with the fact of inspiration—just as they take the other doctrines of fundamentalism as givens, not as deductions—and then they find things in the Bible that seem to support inspiration, claiming, with circular reasoning, that the Bible confirms its inspiration, which they knew all along.

The man who wrestles with the fundamentalist approach to inspiration at length is unsatisfied because he knows he has no good grounds for his belief. The Catholic position is the only one, ultimately, that can satisfy the intellect. The Catholic method of finding the Bible to be inspired begins this way. The Bible is approached as any other ancient work. It is not, at first, presumed to be inspired. From textual criticism we are able to conclude that we have a text the accuracy of which is more certain than the accuracy of any other ancient work.

Sir Frederic Kenyon notes that

[f]or all the works of classical antiquity we have to depend on manuscripts written long after their original composition. The author who is the best case in this respect is Virgil, yet the earliest manuscript of Virgil that we now possess was written some 350 years after his death. For all other classical writers, the interval between the date of the author and the earliest extant manuscript of his works is much greater. For Livy it is about 500 years, for Horace 900, for most of Plato 1,300, for Euripides 1,600.⁴

Yet no one seriously disputes that we have accurate copies of the works of these writers. Not only are the biblical manuscripts we have older than those for classical authors, we have in absolute numbers far more manuscripts to work from. Some are whole books of the Bible, others fragments of just a

few words, but there are thousands of manuscripts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and other languages. What this means is that we can be sure we have an accurate text, and we can work from it in confidence.

Next we take a look at what the Bible, considered merely as a history, tells us, particularly the New Testament, and particularly the Gospels. We examine the account of Jesus' life and death and his reported Resurrection. Using what is in the Gospels themselves, what we find in extrabiblical writings from the early centuries, and what we know of human nature (and what we can otherwise, from natural theology, know of divine nature), we conclude that Jesus either was just what he claimed to be, God, or was a madman, (The one thing we know he could not have been was merely a good man who was not God, because no merely good man would make the claims he made.)

We are able to eliminate his being a madman not just from what he said—no madman ever spoke as he did; for that matter, no sane man ever did either—but from what his followers did after his death, A hoax (the supposedly empty tomb) is one thing, but one does not find people dying for a hoax, at least not one from which they have no prospect of advantage. The result of this line of reasoning is that we must conclude that Jesus indeed rose from the dead and that he was therefore God and, being God, meant what he said and did what he said he would do.

One thing he said he would do was found a Church, and from both the Bible (still taken as merely a historical book, not at this point in the argument as an inspired one) and other ancient works, we see that Christ established a Church with the rudiments of all we see in the Catholic Church today—papacy, hierarchy, priesthood, sacraments, teaching authority, and, as a consequence of the last, infallibility. Christ's Church, to do what he said it would do, had to have the note of infallibility.

We thus have taken purely historical material and concluded that there exists a Church, which is the Catholic Church, divinely protected against teaching error. Now we are at the last part of the argument. That Church tells us the Bible is inspired, and we can take the Church's word for it precisely because the Church is infallible. Only after having been told by a properly constituted authority (that is, one set up by God to assure us of the truth of matters of faith) that the Bible is inspired do we begin to use it as an inspired book.

Here is how Arnold Lunn put it in a 1932 letter to C. E. M. Joad:

We now approach the Bible, and approach it in the same spirit as that in which we should approach any other human document. We do not believe the Bible merely because it is the Bible, but because we are convinced of its veracity by rational inferences similar in kind to those which convince us of other historical facts. We do not, for instance, accept the fact that Christ rose from the dead merely because we find the Resurrection recorded in the Gospels; we accept the Resurrection because, of all theories which have been put forward to explain the origin of Christianity, the only theory which fits all the facts is the theory that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God and proved his claim by rising from the dead. . . . The Roman Catholic, then, claims to prove from the Bible, which he is still treating as a purely human document, that Christ intended to found an infallible Church. Where, then, is this Church? The Roman Catholic Church alone possesses, so the Catholic believes, all the “notes” which enable us to distinguish between the Church which Christ founded and its heretical rivals. The Catholic claims to prove by pure reason that Christ was God, that Christ founded an infallible Church, and that the Roman Catholic Church is the church in question. Having travelled thus far by reason unaided by authority, it is not irrational to trust the authority, whose credentials have been proved by reason, to interpret difficult passages in the Bible.⁵

Note that this is not a circular argument. We are not basing the inspiration of the Bible on the Church’s infallibility and the Church’s infallibility on the word of an inspired Bible. That indeed would be a circular argument.

What we have is really a spiral argument. On the first level we argue to the reliability of the Bible as history. From that we conclude an infallible Church was founded. Then we take the word of that infallible Church that the Bible is inspired. It reduces to the proposition that, without the existence of the Church, we could not tell if the Bible were inspired. As Augustine said, “I would not believe in the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so.”⁶

What has just been discussed is not, obviously, the kind of mental exercise people go through before putting trust in the Bible, but it is the only truly reasonable way to do so. Every other way is inferior—psychologically adequate, perhaps, but actually inferior. In mathematics we accept on “faith” that one and one make two and that one, when added to any integer, will produce the next-highest integer. These truths seem elementary to us, and we are satisfied to take such things at face value, but apprentice mathematicians must go through a semester’s course the whole of which is taken up demonstrating such “obvious” truths. Fundamentalists are quite right in believing the Bible is inspired, but their *reasons* for so believing are inadequate because knowledge of the inspiration of the Bible can be based only on an authority established by God to tell us the Bible is inspired, and that authority is the Church.

Here a more serious problem enters. It seems to some that it makes little

difference why one believes in the Bible's inspiration, just so one believes in it. But the basis for one's belief in its inspiration directly affects how one goes about interpreting the Bible. The Catholic believes in inspiration because the Church tells him so—that is putting it bluntly—and that same Church has the authority to interpret the inspired text. Fundamentalists believe in inspiration, although on weak grounds, but they have no interpreting authority other than themselves.

Newman put it this way in an essay on inspiration published in 1884:

Surely then, if the revelations and lessons in Scripture are addressed to us personally and practically, the presence among us of a formal judge and standing expositor of its words, is imperative. It is antecedently unreasonable to suppose that a book so complex, so unsystematic, in parts so obscure, the outcome of so many minds, times, and places, should be given us from above without the safeguard of some authority; as if it could possibly, from the nature of the case, interpret itself. Its inspiration does but guarantee its truth, not its interpretation. How are private readers satisfactorily to distinguish what is didactic and what is historical, what is fact and what is vision, what is allegorical and what is literal, what is idiomatic and what is grammatical, what is enunciated formally and what occurs *obiter*, what is only of temporary and what is of lasting obligation? Such is our natural anticipation, and it is only too exactly justified in the events of the last three centuries, in the many countries where private judgment on the text of Scripture has prevailed. The gift of inspiration requires as its complement the gift of infallibility.⁷

J. Derek Holmes emphasizes that

[t]hroughout his argument Newman never ignored the main point, that since the writing was irregular, inconsistent, or incomplete, it was antecedently highly improbable that it would contain the whole of the revealed Word of God. The Bible did not contain a complete secular history, and there was no reason why it should contain a complete account of religious truth. It was unreasonable to demand an adequate scriptural foundation for Church doctrines, if the impression gained from the Bible was of writers who took solemn and sacred truths for granted and who did not give a complete or full treatment of the sense of revelation. The writings did not reflect all the beliefs of the writer and events were often presented without comment or moral implication.⁸

Fundamentalists' understanding of inspiration directly affects the way they interpret the Bible and the doctrines they discover in it. Many—not all those writing treatises, but some of them and certainly many in the pews—subscribe to what reduces to a dictation theory of inspiration. This is unfortunate, because “a ‘dictation’ theory may seem a natural account of some experiences of the prophets, but it is psychologically incredible when applied to St. Luke writing his prologue or St. Paul writing to Philemon.”⁹ A

suggestion of the troubles faced by fundamentalists who subscribe to the dictation theory or its practical equivalents comes in passages such as 1 Corinthians 1:14-16. Here is what Paul writes: “Thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius; so that no one can say it was in my name you were baptized. (Yes, and I did baptize the household of Stephanas; I do not know that I baptized anyone else.)” Under the dictation theory, with Paul simply transcribing what God whispered in his ear, one would have to conclude God temporarily forgot who it was Paul baptized. Other examples could be given to show that inspiration is more subtle than many people suspect.

Here is another problem. How does one, on fundamentalist terms, decide when more than one interpretation of a particular passage is allowable and when only one can be admitted? The Catholic Church is silent on the proper interpretation of many biblical passages, readers being allowed to accept one of several understandings.

Take, as an example, Jonah’s escapade at sea, which readers often find disturbing. Ronald Knox said “no defender of the sense of Scripture ever pretended, surely, that this was a natural event. If it happened, it was certainly a miracle; and not to my mind a more startling miracle than the raising of Lazarus, in which I take it Catholics are certainly bound to believe. Surely what puts one off the story of Jonah is the element of the *grotesque* which is present in it.”¹⁰ Actually, what happened to Jonah can be looked at three ways, one of which relies on nothing miraculous occurring at all.

The most common interpretation nowadays, and one that is held by indubitably orthodox exegetes, is that the story of the prophet being swallowed and then disgorged by a “great fish” is merely didactic fiction, a grand tale told to establish a religious point. Catholics are perfectly free to take this or a more literal view, but one seldom will find a fundamentalist who thinks of Jonah as allegory or anything of that sort, although he really has no *authority* for opting for one interpretation over another.

Strictly literal interpretations of what happened to Jonah actually come in two forms. One relies on the fact that people apparently have been swallowed by whales and lived to talk about it. In 1891 a seaman, James Bartley, from a ship named the *Star of the East*, was found missing after an eighty-foot sperm whale had been caught. He was presumed drowned. The next day, when the crew cut up the whale, Bartley was discovered alive inside.¹¹ If Jonah’s three days in the whale were counted like Christ’s three days in the tomb, after the

Semitic fashion—that is, parts of three distinct days, but perhaps only slightly more than twenty-four hours total—then it is possible that Jonah could have been coughed up by that great fish just as his story says. This would be a purely natural explanation of the episode.

The other literal interpretation is that Jonah indeed underwent what the story, read as straight history, says he did, but survived only because of a positive miracle, and several different sorts of miracles have been suggested, such as suspended animation on Jonah's part or a fish with a remarkably large air supply and decidedly mild gastric juices.

Related to the problem of inspiration is the problem of the canon of Scripture. What books constitute the Bible? Catholics can repair to the decisions of the Church, most clearly formalized at Trent and at the fourth-century councils at Hippo and Carthage; these produced lists of books that are to be accepted as inspired on the authority of the infallible Church. Inspired books, taken together, form the Bible. That is the Catholic way to answer the question. What does a fundamentalist fall back on?

William G. Most discusses the rather surprising comments made in 1910 by Gerald Birney Smith, professor at the University of Chicago and speaker at that year's Baptist Congress. As Most says, "Smith's frankness was really remarkable. He reviewed every way he knew to determine which books are or are not inspired" and thus to be included in the canon.

Smith explained that "Luther proposed a practical test. . . . The distinction which he actually had in mind was between those writings which have the power to bring men the assurance of forgiveness through Christ and those which have no such power." Luther was of course relying on his doctrine of salvation by faith alone (not, as Paul would have it, salvation by faith, which is a different thing, implying faith is a prerequisite for salvation but by itself insufficient), "Luther thought a book that intensely preaches this doctrine was inspired", explains Most, "otherwise not. Of course, he never provided proof for such a standard. Nor could it be a standard, for Luther, or any other writer, could compose a book that would preach according to Luther's requirements; yet that book need not on that account be inspired."

Smith, continuing his analysis of the Protestant basis for determining the canon, noted that John Calvin, in his *Institutes*, offered a different test: "The word will never gain credit in the hearts of men till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit," This claim, too—relying on subjective "feelings"—was useless, Smith said, referring to the assaults on the Bible that

were prevalent even a long lifetime ago. “The application of this test. . . would eliminate the existing distinction between canonical and non-canonical writings more completely than would the most radical conclusions of biblical criticism.” After all, many parts of Scripture do not seem uplifting at all, such as 1 and 2 Chronicles, also known as 1 and 2 Paralipomenon, which, like much of Numbers and Deuteronomy, are dull—not the style of writing that shouts, “I’m inspired!” And some clearly noncanonical and thus noninspired books such as Thomas a Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* are more moving than many whole books of the Bible.

Most notes that “what Professor Smith demonstrates is that for a Protestant there simply is no way to know which books are inspired. That means, in practice, that a Protestant, if he is logical, should not appeal to Scripture to prove anything; he has no sure: means of knowing which books are part of Scripture!”¹²

One consequence of this inability to ascertain the canon has been that the Protestant Bible is an incomplete Bible. Missing are the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the two books of Maccabees, as well as sections of Esther (10:4 to 16:24) and Daniel (3:24-90 and chapters 13 and 14). These are known to Catholics as the deuterocanonical works. They are just as much a part of the Bible as the rest of the Old Testament, the protocanonical books. Luther rejected the deuterocanonical books and passages largely because they conflicted with his theological theories. In 2 Maccabees 12:46, for instance, it is said that “it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins”—a reference to purgatory. Such a book had to go—it did not mesh with the Reformer’s doctrines. (Luther even spoke disparagingly about some New Testament books, such as James, but he was unable to find a rationale for removing them from the canon.)

However easy it may have been for the Reformers to say that some books are inspired and thus in the canon, while others are not, they in fact had no solid grounds for making such determinations. Ultimately, an infallible authority is needed if we are to know what belongs in the Bible and what does not. Without such an authority, we are left to our own prejudices, and we cannot tell if our prejudices lead us in the right direction.

The advantages of the Catholic approach to proving inspiration are two. First, the inspiration is really proved, not just “felt”. Second, the main fact behind the proof—the fact of an infallible, teaching Church—leads one

naturally to an answer to the problem that troubled the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:31): How is one to know what interpretations are right? The same Church that authenticates the Bible, that establishes its inspiration, is the authority set up by Christ to interpret his word.

Chapter 10

Tradition Versus “Traditions of Men”

Fundamentalists say the Bible is the sole rule of faith. Everything one needs to believe to be saved is in the Bible, and nothing needs to be added to the Bible. The whole of Christian truth is found within its pages. Anything extraneous to the Bible is simply wrong or hinders rather than helps one toward salvation.

Catholics, on the other hand, say the Bible is not the sole rule of faith and that nothing in the Bible suggests it was meant to be. In fact, the Bible indicates it is not to be taken by itself. The true rule of faith is Scripture and Tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles plus the authority to interpret Scripture rightly.

Vatican II explained the relationship between Tradition and Scripture this way:

Hence there exist a close connection and communication between sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, sacred Tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus, by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same devotion and reverence.¹

The fundamentalist side usually begins its argument by citing two verses. The first is this: “So much has been written down, that you may learn to believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so believing find life through his name” (Jn 20:31). The other is this: “Everything in the scripture has been divinely inspired, and it has its uses; to instruct us, to expose our errors, to correct our faults, to educate in holy living” (2 Tim 3:17). Fundamentalists say these verses demonstrate the reality of *sola scriptura*.

Not so, reply Catholics. The verse from John's Gospel tells us only that the Bible was composed so we can be helped to believe Jesus is the Messiah. It does not say the Bible is all we need for salvation, nor does it say the Bible is actually needed to believe in Christ. After all, the earliest Christians had no New Testament to appeal to; they learned from oral, not written, instruction. Until relatively recent times, the Bible was inaccessible to most people, either because they could not read or because printing had not yet been invented. All these people learned from oral instruction, passed down, generation to generation, by the Church. Granted, it would have been advantageous for them to have the Bible at hand also, but it was not necessary for their salvation.

Much the same can be said about 2 Timothy 3:17. To say that all inspired writing "has its uses" is one thing; to say that such a remark means that only inspired *writing* need be followed is something else. Besides, there is a telling argument against the fundamentalists' claim. It is the contradiction that arises out of their own interpretation of this verse. John Henry Newman explained it this way:

It is quite evident that this passage furnishes no argument whatever that the Sacred Scripture, without Tradition, is the *sole rule of faith*; for, although Sacred Scripture is *profitable* for these four ends, still it is not said to be *sufficient*. The Apostle requites the aid of Tradition (2 Thess 2:15). Moreover, the Apostle here refers to the Scriptures which Timothy was taught in his infancy. Now, a good part of the New Testament was not written in his boyhood: some of the Catholic Epistles were not written even when St. Paul wrote this, and none of the Books of the New Testament were then placed on the canon of the Scripture books. He refers, then, to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and if the argument from this passage proved anything, it would prove too much, viz., that the Scriptures of the New Testament were not necessary for a rule of faith.²

The Bible actually denies that it is the complete rule of faith. John tells us that not everything concerning Christ's work is in Scripture (Jn 21:25), and Paul says that much Christian teaching is to be found in the tradition that is handed down by word of mouth (2 Tim 2:2). He instructs us to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Th 2:15). We are told that the first Christians "were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles" (Acts 2:42), which was the oral teaching that was given long before the New Testament was written—and centuries before the canon of the New Testament was settled.

This oral teaching must be accepted by Christians as they accepted the written teaching that at length came to them. "He who listens to you, listens

to me; he who despises you, despises me” (Lk 10:16). The Church, in the persons of the apostles, was given the authority to teach by Christ; the Church would be his stand-in. “Go, therefore, making disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). How was this to be done? By preaching, by oral instruction: “See how faith comes from hearing, and hearing through Christ’s word” (Rom 10:17). The Church would always be available as the living teacher. It is a mistake to limit Christ’s word to the written word only or to suggest that all his teachings were reduced to writing. The Bible nowhere supports either notion.

After all, God, speaking through Isaiah, promised a living voice in the Church that Christ would establish: “This is my covenant with them, says the Lord: My spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your children, nor out of the mouth of your children’s children, says the Lord, from now until forever” (Is 59:21). This prophecy must refer to a living Church, the culmination of Israel, and not to a book because no book, not even the Bible, is a living teacher.

The oral teaching would last until the end of time. “But the word of the Lord lasts forever. And this word is nothing other than the Gospel which has been preached to you” (1 Pet 1:25). Note that the word has been “preached”—that is, it was oral. This would endure. It would not be supplanted by a written record like the Bible (supplemented, yes, but not supplanted), but would continue to have its own authority.

In this discussion it is important to keep in mind what the Catholic Church means by Tradition. The term does not mean legends or mythological accounts, nor does it mean transitory customs or practices that come and go as circumstances warrant, such as styles of priestly dress, particular forms of devotion to saints, or even liturgical rubrics. Tradition means the teachings and teaching authority of Jesus and, derivatively, the apostles. These have been handed down and entrusted to the Church (which means to its official teachers, the bishops in union with the Pope). It is necessary that Christians believe in and follow this Tradition as well as the Bible (Lk 10:16). The truth of the faith has been given primarily to the leaders of the Church (Eph 3:5), who, with Christ, form the foundation of the Church (Eph 2:20). The Church has been guided by the Holy Spirit, who protects this teaching from corruption (Jn 14:16),

Paul illustrated what Tradition is: “The chief message I handed on to you,

as it was handed on to me, was that Christ, as the scriptures foretold, died for our sins. . . . That is our preaching, mine or theirs as you will; that is the faith that has come to you” (1 Cor 15:3, 11). He said also, to Timothy, who was a bishop, “Thou hast learned, from many who can witness to it, the doctrine which I hand down; give it into the keeping of men thou canst trust, men who will know how to teach it to others besides themselves” (2 Tim 2:2). In other words, Timothy, one of the successors to the apostles, was to teach what he had learned from his predecessor, Paul. The apostle praised those who followed Tradition: “I must praise you for your constant memory of me, for upholding your traditions just as I handed them on to you” (1 Cor 11:2).

The first Christians “occupied themselves continually with the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42) long before there was a Bible. The fullness of Christian teaching was found, right from the first, in the Church as the living embodiment of Christ, not in a book. The teaching Church, with its oral traditions, was authoritative. Paul himself gives a quotation from Jesus that was handed down orally to him: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). This saying is not found in the Gospels and must have been passed on to Paul. Indeed, even the Gospels themselves are oral Tradition that has been written down (Lk 1:1-4). What is more, Paul does not quote Jesus only. He also quotes from early Christian hymns, as in Ephesians 5:14. These and other things have been given to Christians “by the command of the Lord Jesus” (1 Th 4:2).

Fundamentalists have objections to all of this, of course. They say Jesus condemned Tradition. They note that Jesus said, “Why is it that you yourselves violate the commandment of God with your traditions?” (Mt 15:3). Paul warned, “Take care not to let anyone cheat you with his philosophizings, with empty phantasies drawn from human tradition, from worldly principles; they were never Christ’s teaching” (Col 2:8). But these verses merely condemn erroneous human traditions, not truths that were handed down orally and entrusted to the Church. These truths are part of what is known as Tradition (with an upper-case “T”, to distinguish it from lower-case human traditions or customs).

Consider Matthew 15:6-9, which fundamentalists often bring up: “So by these traditions of yours you have made God’s laws ineffectual. You hypocrites, it was a true prophecy that Isaiah made of you, when he said, This people does me honor with its lips, but its heart is far from me. Their worship is in vain, for the doctrines they teach are the commandments of men,” At

first glance, this seems to undercut the Catholic position, but look at the context. Jesus was not here condemning all traditions. He condemned only those that made God's word void. In this case, it was a matter of the Pharisees making a pretended dedication of their goods to the Temple so they could avoid using them to support their aged parents. By doing this, they dodged the commandment to "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ex 20:12).

Elsewhere, Jesus instructed his followers to abide by traditions that are not contrary to God's commandments. "The scribes and the Pharisees, he said, have established themselves in the place from which Moses used to teach; do what they tell you, then, continue to observe what they tell you, but do not imitate their actions, for they tell you one thing and do another" (Mt 23:2-3).

He told the Pharisees that they were hypocrites who "will award to God his tithe, though it be of mint or dill or cummin, and have forgotten the weightier commandments of the law, justice, mercy, and honor; you did ill to forget one duty while you performed the other" (Mt 23:23). In short, Jesus insisted we should follow all legitimate traditions. In all these cases he was referring to traditions in the sense of customs (lower-case tradition), not to Tradition in the sense of the Church's teaching authority (upper-case). The latter is wider than the former and includes it.

The big problem, no doubt, is determining what constitutes authentic Tradition. How do we know that what had been handed down by the Catholic Church is correct doctrine and practice? We know it is correct because Christ promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church. (Mt 16:18), The Church would be indefectible; its official teaching would be infallible. To it, through Peter, Christ gave his own teaching authority (Mt 16:19; 28:18-20).

Under the Old Covenant, it was said, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at this mouth" (Malachi 2:7), Under the New Covenant, Christ sent his Church to teach men and transferred to it the authority the priests of the Old Covenant had. We find Philip the deacon asking the Ethiopian, who was reading Scripture, "Canst thou understand what thou art reading?" The Ethiopian replied, "How could I . . . without someone to guide me?" (Acts 8:30-31). We are reminded that "no prophecy in Scripture is the subject of private interpretation" (2 Pet 1:20). The Bible, while meant to be read by individual Christians, indicates that a divinely appointed guide is needed to get through treacherous passages, of which there are many.

“But the Bible itself says it is the sole rule of faith!” insist fundamentalists. They quote John 5:39, in which it is said, “search the scriptures”, but they do not take the phrase in context. They imagine it to be a command to the reader: “Get your Bible and verify that all Christian truths can be discovered in the plain sense of the text.” That is not what Jesus was saying. He was rebuking disbelieving Jews, not claiming that the Bible is the sole rule of faith. Jesus was pointing out to the Pharisees that the messianic prophecies were fulfilled in him. “If you read Scripture, you can verify this for yourselves!” He was referring to a single theme. This verse cannot be stretched to mean that all religious truth can be found on the surface of the Bible.

Fundamentalists also cite Acts 17:11, which refers to the Bereans, who “welcomed the word with all eagerness, and examined the scriptures, day after day, to find out whether all this was true”. Again, here is a verse taken out of context. What really happened is that these people first had been taught Christianity orally and now checked to see if its claims matched the Old Testament prophecies. The verse does not at all mean one uses the Bible as a checklist for all Christian doctrines. (If it meant that, there would be, again, the problem Newman brought up, that the Old Testament *alone* would be sufficient as a rule of faith, the New Testament unnecessary.)

What fundamentalists often do, unfortunately, is see the word “tradition” in Matthew 15:3 or Colossians 2:8 or elsewhere and conclude that anything termed a “tradition” is to be rejected. They forget that the term is used in a different sense, as in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, to describe what *should* be believed. Jesus did not condemn all traditions; he condemned only erroneous traditions, whether doctrines or practices, that undercut Christian truths. The rest, as the apostles taught, were to be adhered to.

The notion of *sola scriptura* arose when the Reformers rejected the papacy. In doing that they also rejected the teaching authority of the Church. They looked elsewhere for the rule of faith and thought they found it in the Bible. Really, they had no place else to look. By default, the interpretation of the Bible would be left to the individual, as guided by the Holy Spirit.

In theory this may sound fine, but it has not worked well in practice, and that argues against the truth of the theory. Actually, both reason and experience tell us the Bible could not have been intended as each man’s private guide to the truth. If individual guidance by the Holy Spirit were a reality, each Christian would understand the same thing from any particular verse since God cannot teach error. Yet Christians have understood

contradictory things from Scripture—even Christians whose “born-again” experiences cannot be doubted. Indeed, fundamentalists often differ among themselves on what the Bible means. They may agree on most major points, but the frequency and vehemence of their squabbles on lesser matters, which should be just as clear if the Holy Spirit is enlightening them, prove the sacred text cannot explain itself.

Chapter 11

Development of Doctrine

The opening verse of Hebrews reminds us that “in the old days, God spoke to our fathers in many ways and by many means”. This was done, the Greek implies, fragmentarily and under various figures. Man was not handed religious truth as though from a Scholastic theologian, neatly laid out and indexed. There was no antediluvian equivalent of the *Baltimore Catechism*. Doctrines had to be thought out, lived out, even pieced together, over centuries, the great leaps coming through new revelations.

Most fundamentalists will acknowledge that much. They admit there was a real development in doctrine: an initial message, which became clouded, nearly lost, at the Fall, and then progressively fuller explications as God prepared Israel for the Messiah, until finally the apostles were instructed by the Messiah himself. Gregory the Great put it like this: “With the progress of the times the knowledge of the spiritual fathers increased; for, in the science of God, Moses was more instructed than Abraham, the prophets more than Moses, the apostles more than the prophets.”¹

With Christ and the apostles general revelation ended. The clear teaching of the Bible is that after the death of the last apostle no further revelation is to be made.² Christ was the fulfillment of the law of the Old Testament (Mt 5:17) and the ultimate teacher of humanity: “You have one teacher, Christ” (Mt 23:10). The apostles recognized that their task was to pass on, perfectly intact, the faith given to them by the Master: “Thou hast learned, from many who can witness to it, the doctrine which I hand down; give it into the keeping of men thou canst trust, men who will know how to teach it to others besides themselves” (2 Tim 2:2); “It is for thee to hold fast to the doctrine handed on to thee, the charge committed to thee” (2 Tim 3:14).

Keeping to the teaching of the apostles, the Fathers rejected the claims of heretics, such as the Gnostics, to possess secret doctrines or a new revelation. Irenaeus and Tertullian stressed that the fullness of revelation is contained in the doctrines of the apostles, doctrines that are preserved unfalsified through

the succession of bishops. This is not to say that there is not a true progress in the understanding of what has been entrusted to the Church. One cannot prevent men from drawing true inferences from true doctrines. Anyone with a serious interest in Christianity will ask, What does this doctrine imply? How does it relate to that doctrine? How can it be squared with this other belief? How does it relate to changed conditions in the world, to things that were not even dreamt of when the last of the Twelve died? In short, how is any doctrine to be understood, what does a true understanding imply, and what does it exclude?

In answering these questions, the Church develops—we perhaps can say “matures”—doctrines, but it does not alter their essence. It is not a matter of inventing new beliefs, but of clearing up obscurities regarding old ones. Vincent of Lerins, in about 450, explained it this way: “But perhaps someone is saying, Will there then be no progress of religion in the Church of Christ? Certainly there is, and the greatest. . . . But it is truly progress and not a change of faith. What is meant by progress is that something is brought to an advancement within itself; by change, that something is transformed from one thing into another.”³

The fathers of Vatican II explained development in this fashion:

The tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (Luke 2:19, 51), through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For, as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.⁴

Thomas Aquinas noted that truths that were at one time only implicitly believed are later expressly proposed for belief.⁵ An example of this—an example to which he could not, of course, have had recourse—is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was talked about for centuries and then, at what seemed the opportune moment, formally defined. At any one time, the student of theological history will find, there were more articles to be believed than there had been at any earlier time, but fewer than there were to be later. Clarity is added, but never subtracted. As the world grows old, we have the comfort of more doctrinal security (if we but ask for it) than did our ancestors. This growth in doctrine comes about in various ways. Sometimes it

arises from the prayerful thinking of theologians and appears as the result of obscure disputations or forgotten essays in forgotten journals. More usually it is a matter of old truths being made clearer to avoid misunderstanding or heresies being headed off at the pass.

Consider the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not present on the face of Scripture, not just in the sense that the word Trinity is never used—its first use was by Theophilus of Antioch in 181⁶—but also in the sense that it is by no means obvious, from the surface meaning of the text, that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person. We naturally read back into the Bible the beliefs we already hold, each of us having been instructed in the Faith before ever picking up the Bible. References to the Holy Spirit's divinity seem to jump out at us. If we imagine ourselves as ancient pagans or as present-day non-Christians, coming across the Bible for the first time, we realize that the status of the Holy Spirit is by no means clear. If we think of ourselves as having no recourse to divine Tradition and to the Magisterium of the Church, we can appreciate how easy it must have been for the early pneumatological heresies to arise.

Another example is transubstantiation. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel the Eucharist is promised. If this chapter is read in conjunction with the accounts of the Last Supper, it is easy to see that the first Christians knew, from the very start, that the bread and wine were transformed into Christ's actual Body and Blood. Though attesting that such a transformation happens, the Bible is silent about *how* it happens. Little wonder, then, that in later years disputes arose concerning the way this mysterious change took place. (Perhaps the greatest wonder is that there was no serious opposition to the Real Presence at all until the writings of Berengarius of Tours, who lived in the eleventh century.)

Not until 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, was the term transubstantiation imposed, the imposition being not so much the addition of something new as the exclusion of various false explanations. This tongue twister was the only term that eliminated wrong (but seemingly right) explanations of the mystery, that gave equivocating opponents of it no room to hide. From the Gospels Christians knew that the Real Presence was real, and, had they given no thought at all to the matter for the succeeding twelve centuries, no definition would have been required at Lateran IV for the simple reason that no disputes would have arisen regarding what the doctrine really meant. But because people did put their minds to the matter, because

they did try to draw true inferences from true doctrines, and because not all of them were adept at that, disputes did arise, and a formal definition was necessary.

Another example. The Council of Nicaea responded to the most damaging ancient heresy, Arianism, by adopting the non-scriptural word *homoousios* (“same substance”) and contrasting it with *homoiousios* (“like substance”).⁷ Christ was of the same substance as the Father, not merely of a like substance—that is, he was himself divine, not just the most favored of creatures. The Church had come, finally, to a full, or at least a sufficiently full, understanding of Christology and was able to say authoritatively, “On this subject, the Bible and Tradition mean *this*.”

As these cases and innumerable others demonstrate, doctrinal questions can remain in a state of suspense for years. The Church has never felt the need to define formally what there has been no particular pressure to define. This strikes many, particularly non-Catholics, as odd. Why were things not cleared up in, say, the year 100 so folks could know what to believe? Why did Rome issue no laundry list of definitions in the early days and let it go at that? Why was no end run made around all these troubles that plagued Christianity precisely because things were unclear? The remote reason is that God has had his own timetable and an excellent rationale (to which we are not privy) for keeping to it. A more immediate reason is that Rome, meaning the Magisterium of the Church, could not define what it did not know. This returns us to the subjects of infallibility and inspiration. The Pope and the bishops, when teaching in union with him, are infallible in defining dogmas, but infallibility works only negatively. Papal *ex cathedra* pronouncements and ecumenical councils are, through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, prevented from teaching what is untrue, but they are not forced to teach what *is* true.

The Pope and the bishops are not inspired the way the authors of Scripture or the prophets were. To make a new definition, to clear up some dogmatic confusion, they first must use reason, operating on what is known to date, to be able to teach more precisely what is to be held as true. They cannot teach what they do not know, and they have no access to oracular shortcuts. The one great advantage they have over their ancient predecessors in the papacy and episcopacy, over theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas, is that they begin with a more clearly defined body of doctrine. Augustine did not have the advantage of a conciliar decree on transubstantiation; Aquinas could not

refer to one on papal infallibility. They could not very well reason *from* such formalized doctrines to the doctrines' natural implications, at least not in the way now possible. One cannot reach a legitimate conclusion unless the premises are first safe in hand, and if the premises are relatively few, conclusions, no matter how excellent, will also be few.

This chapter has gotten this far with hardly a word about charges by fundamentalists, but there has been a purpose in the delay. Fundamentalists' confusion can be perceived most readily if the Catholic position on doctrinal development is discussed first. Consider what Bill Jackson, head of Christians Evangelizing Catholics, says: "The Roman Catholic Church likens itself to a flower box in which many seeds have been planted. They are God's revelations to men; some have just come up, others are blossoming, etc. They claim these seeds were all planted by Christ, but that they develop at different times depending on the need of the Church." He argues that "the first error is saying Christ planted the seeds. Many important Roman Catholic doctrines have no scriptural basis—Immaculate Conception, Assumption, Purgatory, etc. The next error is to suppose that any need was not provided for the infant church. Paul said he preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). How could he, if some of God's truths were in seed form buried beneath the earth? Scripture was given by inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16). He never changes; God's Truth never changes. Any development of doctrine is of human or satanic origin."⁸

Jackson thinks the Catholic Church believes in time-delayed revelation. Entirely new religious beliefs are just waiting to sprout—and will, as soon as Rome is properly watered. It is his flower-box analogy that leads Jackson astray. This analogy fundamentalists picked up from Catholic apologists. Catholics thought that by using it they were making doctrinal development clearer, but fundamentalists thought the analogy was an admission of something the Church does not in fact believe. The analogy, despite its seeming clarity, can lead one astray. It is, in fact, simply inadequate to explain doctrinal development.

Joseph Tixeront, referring to Catholic apologists in his *History of Dogmas*, put it like this: "Generally scholars have been too easily satisfied with vague formulas and mere comparisons, which are not precise enough (the child who becomes a man, the kernel that becomes a tree, etc.). For the question to be answered in a technical and adequate manner is this: When is an idea or a doctrine a mere development of another idea or doctrine, and when is it to be

considered a substantial alteration or transformation of it?”⁹ Frank Sheed had a similar thought when he wrote against using the shamrock as an explanation of the Trinity.¹⁰ The shamrock does not help us understand the doctrine, he said; it just helps us swallow it. And the analogy of seeds too easily permits fundamentalists to imagine the Catholic Church teaches that entirely new doctrines, unrelated to existing ones, are going to pop up at any time.

If Jackson misconstrues the Catholic position, at least he looks for it, which is more than can be said for most fundamentalists. He makes some effort to give the Catholic view. Like all fundamentalists, he finally falls back on the standard line, which is that what Catholics call doctrinal development is nothing more than a centuries-old accumulation of pagan beliefs and rites. The Catholic Church has not really refined the original deposit of faith; instead, it has added to it from the outside. In its hurry, particularly in the early centuries, to enlarge the membership rolls, it let just about anybody in the door—and when existing inducements were not enough, it adopted pagan ways to get pagans to “convert”. Each time the Church did this it moved further away from real Christianity.

As an example of this thinking, consider Christmas. Strict fundamentalists do not observe Christmas, and not only because the name of the feast is inescapably “Christ Mass”. Some say they disapprove of it because there is no proof Christ was born on December 25; they say he could not have been born then because the shepherds, who were in the fields with their sheep, did not put sheep into the fields during winter. Still others note the Bible is silent about the Feast of Christmas. But these are all prolegomena. The real reasons are that Christmas was established, quite indisputably, by the Catholic Church (which is bad enough) and that the Church superimposed this holy day on a pagan festival (which is worse). Connections are made to Chaldean and Babylonian worship, Zoroastrianism, even Anglo-Saxon rites. Santa Claus is unmasked as nothing but a commercialized version of Catholicism’s St. Nicholas. As Donald F. Maconaghie of the Conversion Center writes in a tract distributed to his mailing list, “No one who acknowledges the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures to direct in all questions of doctrine and practice will have any fellowship in Xmas [*sic*] celebrations after his attention has been called to the matter, unless he does it deliberately in selfwill.”¹¹

Fundamentalists complain that the Church transformed pagan festivals into

Christian feasts, and such an association with paganism, they think, is conclusive proof of Rome's compromising. They quote with relish John Henry Newman's seemingly damaging admission:

We are told in various ways by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred to it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own. It is not necessary to go into a subject which the diligence of Protestant writers has made familiar to most of us. The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holydays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.^{[12](#)}

Fundamentalists forget that even paganism had some truth mixed in with its error. Christianity took those elements of truth, removed erroneous associations so that they ceased to be pagan, and made use of the purified truth the better to express Christian notions. Christianity gave new meanings to old things, and in the process the pagan connections ceased. It was a matter of outright replacement, not compromise.

Another good, although strained, example of the fundamentalist attitude may be found in a sermon by the Rev. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who says the problem with Rome "is not so much a matter of 'denial' of the truth, but rather such an addition to the truth that eventually it becomes a departure from it". To admittedly orthodox teachings "she 'adds,' with a damnable plus, things which are utterly unscriptural and which, indeed, become a denial of the Scripture". There follows a litany more hysterical than usual for fundamentalists, Lloyd-Jones going so far as to insist the Church "teaches her people to worship images" (most fundamentalists just say this is the natural result, although perhaps not the intent, of Church teachings). With respect to beliefs that are peculiarly Catholic, Lloyd-Jones says that "there is not a word about [them] in the New Testament". Part of his problem is that he thinks the Catholic Church teaches that "she has received 'continuing revelation' "—Bill Jackson's seeds again. "She does not believe, as true Protestants do, that revelation ended with what we have in the New Testament."^{[13](#)}

Give him partial points. It is true that Catholics do not think revelation ended with what is in the New Testament. They believe, though, that it ended with the death of the last apostle. The part of revelation that was not committed to writing—the part that is outside the New Testament and is the

oral teaching that is the basis of Tradition—*that* part of revelation Catholics also accept, and in this they follow the apostle Paul’s injunction: “Stand firm, then, brethren, and hold by the traditions you have learned, in word or in writing, from us” (2 Th 2:14). If Lloyd-Jones thinks the Church believes in a continuing revelation, he has not bothered to study the first chapter of any elementary theological work by a Catholic. Every discussion of revelation notes that revelation ended when the last apostle died. Lloyd-Jones’ trouble, the trouble of all fundamentalists, is that he labors under the misconception that Scripture has the last word and that the Tradition built on oral teaching counts for nothing.

One of the keenest arguments against the fundamentalists’ “Bible only” position was given by Newman in *Tract 85*, written while he was still an Anglican. This is the way J. M. Cameron summarizes Newman’s argument in his introduction to Newman’s *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*;

The argument is directed towards the Protestant critic of Tractarianism and in a simplified form goes like this. You criticize the Tractarians for teaching such doctrines as, for example, the Apostolic Succession of bishops or that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, and your criticism rests on the contention that these doctrines are not plainly and unambiguously contained in Scripture and may not indeed be in the Bible at all. I concede, goes the reply, that these doctrines are not to be found in the letter of Scripture or on its surface. But this is just as true of other doctrines you as an orthodox Protestant believe quite firmly; such doctrines as, let us say, the Godhead of the Holy Spirit or that Holy Scripture contains all that is sufficient for salvation. Neither of these doctrines is contained on the surface of Scripture, and there would even be logical difficulties in supposing that Scripture contained the latter doctrine. It seems to me that you ought in consistency to believe less than you do or more than you do. If you confine yourself to what is contained in Scripture then the content of your belief will be thin and even incoherent and you will have no rationale for giving the Bible this supreme position. What you do, inconsistently, believe (for you are not, thank God, a Unitarian) is a warrant for your going further and adopting as your criterion the tradition of the first few centuries and using this tradition, embodied in the formularies of the Church, as that in the light of which Scripture is to be read and understood. You must either move upwards into Catholicism or downwards into unbelief. There is no midway point of rest.¹⁴

Newman noted that, in any century, what was believed by the Catholic Church can be seen to be the logical and necessary outgrowth and the deeper understanding of what was believed the century before. Going backward, from the nineteenth century to the very early Middle Ages, is easy. No one really doubts that what was called the Catholic Church in 1845, when Newman wrote, was the same institution that took that name in, say, 845. (Newman wrote, of course, before the definitions of the Immaculate

Conception, papal infallibility, and the Assumption, three of the main “unscriptural” doctrines pointed at by fundamentalists, but his argument is just as valid, just as useful, today.)

The hard part concerns the early centuries, but, if one examines these in sequence, he sees a natural progression, a true growth in doctrine. There is no change of course, but a continuation along a single road. Something is clarified in one century, and in the next that clarification is investigated and built on so that a further clarification is produced. On and on it goes. What was determined with finality in the past is kept—there is no jettisoning of old doctrines for new—but fuller understandings are added. Thus, the few biblical references to Mary result in the splendid devotion to the Mother of God that was a hallmark of the medieval Church, best exemplified, perhaps, by the monument that is Notre Dame Cathedral.

Newman’s is not the final word on the development of doctrine, not by any means, but his is a tour de force that should be savored by anyone who wants to be able to give more than just a pat answer to fundamentalists who say today’s peculiarly Catholic doctrines have nothing to do with the beliefs of the early Church. His argument is too refined and too large to be used in regular apologetic work, but at least the book can be recommended to fundamentalists who are serious about learning how the Catholic Church views doctrinal development and to Catholics who want to savor fine prose and finer theological thinking. As in so many matters, there is no better teacher than Newman.

Chapter 12

Fanciful Histories of Catholicism

If few fundamentalists know the history of their own religion—and distressingly few do—even fewer have any appreciation for the history of the Catholic Church. They become easy prey for purveyors of fanciful histories that claim to account for the origin and advance of Catholicism. These histories take two basic forms. One makes the legalization of Christianity during the reign of the Emperor Constantine the determining fact; the other looks to the influence of the ancient mystery religions. Both conclude Catholicism is part Christian, part pagan, and wholly to be rejected.

The first version seems more like real history and is generally the more convincing, at least to readers with some schooling, while the second plays better to people who look for sensationalism and depends for its effect on superficial similarities between Catholicism and pagan cults.

The first, which might be called the “pagan convert” theory, begins, most commonly, with a listing of Catholic “inventions”. These are doctrines or practices that the Church allegedly adopted for the most part from paganism long after apostolic times. The first thing to notice is that in any list of “inventions” doctrines are mixed up with practices, fundamentalist writers apparently not understanding the difference.

A doctrine is a fixed belief, a dogma, such as (to limit it to peculiarly “Catholic” doctrines) the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, purgatory, the sacraments, transubstantiation. Practices, on the other hand, are changeable. They are customs, ways of doing things. They include, for instance, rituals or dress or habits of prayer that may change over the years: the language of the Mass, the style of priestly vestments, the use or nonuse of incense during Mass, making the sign of the Cross. Of course, these practices are connected with doctrines, but they are not themselves doctrines. It is immaterial that many practices are present neither in the Bible nor in early Christian history. Practices are not the subject, of revelation, the way doctrines are; they are adopted as present needs require and are dropped for

the same reason.

To continue with the first kind of “history”: Fundamentalist writers begin by listing “inventions”, mixing doctrines and practices indiscriminately. They then assign dates of origin to them. They generally claim the “inventions” postdate the Edict of Milan, which was issued in 313 and made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire. This is the cutoff date, all the bad things in Catholicism supposedly arising after that point. In fact, the dating of the “inventions” is often grossly wrong or, where right, irrelevant to the point in question, which is: When did Catholicism begin?

For instance, transubstantiation is usually assigned to the Fourth Lateran Council, held in 1215. This, say fundamentalists, was when the doctrine was “invented”. Wrong. This was when the technical term “transubstantiation” was settled on as the right term to use to describe the doctrine of the Real Presence, which, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, can be shown to antedate Constantine’s reign. In fact, the doctrine can be proved from John 6. So, the year 1215 *does* concern transubstantiation, but it is not the date when the doctrine underlying the term was first believed.

After presenting a list of “inventions”, anti-Catholic writers cite John Henry Newman’s admission, quoted in the previous chapter, that many Catholic customs are of pagan origin,¹ What Newman said is quite true, naturally, and merely demonstrates that some kinds of Catholic practices are common to many liturgical religions. By the way, it is worth pointing out that fundamentalist writers usually misquote this passage from Newman; for instance, they tend to leave out “the ring in marriage”. After all, giving rings in marriage is something they do in their own churches, and they do not want to be reminded that the practice is pagan in origin, as are other elements of their wedding ceremonies.

After listing the “inventions” and quoting Newman, the fundamentalist writers get to history proper. They say that until the reign of Constantine, all was well with Christianity. It remained essentially intact, although there were a few minor heresies in the three centuries following Pentecost. The early Christians, they say, took the Bible alone as their guide. They were not Protestants, and they were certainly not Catholics. They were just Christians. They faced persecution, first from the Jews, later from the Roman Empire. The persecution ended when, through the Edict of Milan, Constantine legalized Christianity.

It was either then or, decades later, when Christianity was made the official

religion of the Empire that, as Loraine Boettner phrased it,

thousands of people who still were pagans pressed into the church in order to gain special advantages and favors that went with such membership. They came in in far greater numbers than could be instructed or assimilated. Having been used to the more elaborate pagan rituals, they were not satisfied with the simple Christian worship but began to introduce their heathen beliefs and practices. Gradually, through the neglect of the Bible and the ignorance of the people, more and more heathen ideas were introduced until the church became more heathen than Christian.²

But there were still “real” Christians, few in number, often in hiding, who kept the Faith through the centuries, until, at the Reformation, they gained a certain ascendancy. The spiritual heirs of these people are today’s fundamentalists.

This outline of ecclesiastical history, as given by Boettner and others, depends for its support on several things. The most important is dating. The theory is that all was well with the Church until Constantine gave it political preference. Yet if all was well with Christianity prior to 313—if it had not yet transmogrified into Catholicism—we should expect to find all the peculiarly Catholic doctrines and practices arising only after that date. Before that, the historical record should show us a Christianity un-distinguishable from present-day fundamentalism. This is what fundamentalist commentators imply is the case, as they list dozens of Catholic “inventions”, each allegedly arising after 313.

Now it would have to be conceded that fundamentalists would have at least a superficial case if all the “inventions” they list *did* first develop after Christianity was legalized. If, in the first three centuries of Christian history, we could find no distinctively Catholic beliefs or practices, that would be an argument in favor of fundamentalism. When we look at ecclesiastical history, what do we really find? We see many of these peculiarly Catholic practices, and virtually all of the peculiarly Catholic doctrines, are mentioned in works written during the first, second, and third centuries. Some of the references are, admittedly, sparse, but others are surprisingly full, referring to these doctrines and practices as already being old. We find mention of a sacrificing priesthood, a hierarchy of bishops, prayers for the dead, the veneration of saints, and much more—enough, at any rate, to demolish the fundamentalists’ attempt at history.

This story about Constantine and the supposed influx of paganism into the Church might be called the standard fundamentalist history: bare bones, not

backed up with facts, ignorant of when the doctrines and practices really came into existence. Still, it is not an unreasonable theory, just a wrong one. If the datings were right, there would be merit to it.

There is a more exotic history that often is seen as a supplement to the standard one. It might be called the “Whore of Babylon” theory. Its best-known proponent is Ralph Woodrow, author of *Babylon Mystery Religion*. Instead of attributing the existence of Catholicism to Christianity’s legalization by Constantine, Woodrow and authors of like-minded works concentrate on superficial similarities between Catholicism and the ancient mystery religions, particularly the Babylonian cults. They make the logically false argument that similarity implies descent, and they pile up hundreds of examples, not one of which, in isolation, proves anything, but which, taken all together, persuade the ignorant by sheer volume.

To understand how wrong these fundamentalist writers are, one needs to understand a little about the religions that predated Christianity. There were, of course, the religions of Rome and Greece, which were unable to satisfy men’s hunger for God. The Roman religion was moralistic, concerned largely with inculcating civic virtue, but it lacked anything that could capture the imagination. The Greek religion was nonmoral (indeed, the Greek gods were often quite immoral), but it left more room for the imagination. The Greek religion was rejected by the best minds of Greece, who turned from it to philosophy, which, while taking many wrong turns, did at last make some progress, declaring the supremacy of the spiritual while adopting a false view of matter.

Then came the mystery religions, which promised to rescue men from the puerility of the traditional Greco-Roman cults. These religions, coming into the Empire from the East beginning about three centuries before Christ, included the cults of Isis from Egypt, Adonis from Babylonia, Attis from Phrygia, and Mithra from Persia. They seem to have arisen through personifications of nature, particularly birth and death as seen in the cycles of the seasons. Commonly, the resurrected gods had been sent from heaven, or the abode of the gods, to “save” humanity. These cults were clothed in luxurious rituals and impressed people brought up on the desiccated religions of Rome and Greece or on philosophy, which seemed to have run into a dead end. What made the mystery cults particularly attractive was that they offered the two things people in the Empire most wanted, the assurance of personal immortality and union with God, what could be called salvation. This

salvation was achieved by being initiated into the mysteries, or secret teachings, of a cult. After the initiation, which usually came through a kind of baptism, the new converts participated in a ceremony that reenacted the death and rebirth of the god.

These cults bore marked, though superficial, resemblance to Catholicism, which is what fundamentalist writers have played on. They also bore marked resemblance to fundamentalism, at least in things that Catholicism and fundamentalism hold in common, and this is something always overlooked in anti-Catholic writings. If the truth of Catholicism is undercut by similarities to mystery religions, so is the truth of fundamentalism. If Catholicism happens to have more points of similarity with paganism, it is not because it is more likely to have grown from these cults, but because it is a broader religion. Looked at another way, Catholicism is full-blown Christianity, while fundamentalism is truncated Christianity, so there exist more aspects in Catholicism to which there could be parallels in paganism. If the existence of similarities means Catholicism is false, the same conclusion must be drawn about fundamentalism; in this regard they sink or swim together.

That, anyway, is an overview of the pagan religions in the Roman Empire of the first century. It is from them, particularly from the mystery cults, that Woodrow insists Catholicism sprang. Most of his proofs are laughable; all of them are unworthy of serious consideration. Yet he can claim to have sold a quarter of a million copies of his book since it appeared in 1966—no mean feat and one that demonstrates that anti-Catholic sentiment is not only alive and well among fundamentalists and evangelicals, but that many of our separated brethren are concerned enough about the Catholic Church to turn to books that purport to deal with its origins. They want to learn how this strange growth developed.

A thirst for scholarship is not the only reason, not even the main reason, people buy this book. The main attraction is a kind of prurience. *Babylon Mystery Religion* does not have much to say about sex; it is not prurient in the most common connotation of the word. It is prurient according to the other dictionary definition in that it satisfies restless cravings many people have. They want to believe there is a dark secret to Catholicism, and they want to be let in on the secret. They want to luxuriate in horror stories, and they want their worst suspicions confirmed. Woodrow's book shows that Catholicism's success has been due not to its merits, but to influence-peddling, fortuitous events, and underhanded dealings, even violence. It demonstrates that

Catholicism is really something dark and alien to Christianity—something, in fact, connected with Christianity only tangentially, not essentially. Woodrow’s thesis, which is not new to him, is that Catholicism’s distinctive elements have not been derived from authentic Christianity. They are not legitimate developments, but wholesale borrowings from pre-Christian cults. This is how the back cover of the book explains it:

Babylon Mystery Religion is a detailed Biblical and historical account of how, when, why, and where ancient paganism was mixed with Christianity. From the early days of Babylon and the legends surrounding Nimrod, Semiramis, and Tammuz, certain rites and rituals are traced in their various developments, thus providing clues whereby the “mystery” is solved! The apostles had predicted that there would come a “falling away” and the proof of their prediction is now evident in history. With such evidence in hand, all true believers should seek, as never before, the simplicity found in Christ himself and to earnestly contend for that original faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Babylon Mystery Religion is indebted to Alexander Hislop’s *The Two Babylons*, first published in 1853 and reprinted innumerable times since. In fact, Woodrow’s book would not be described wrongly as a revised version of Hislop’s. The argument is that things that distinguish Catholicism from Protestantism—such as the papacy, intercession of the saints, and purgatory—are really borrowings from ancient pagan religions. With sketches, photographs, woodcuts, and a host of one-liners, Woodrow attempts to show this. From Egyptian devotion to Isis, the reader is told, comes Catholic devotion to Mary, and from Buddhism comes the sign of the Cross. St. Bridget never existed, but was merely a replacement for a fertility goddess, Lent was derived from festivals in honor of the death and resurrection of Tanimuz.

Woodrow searched for coincidences, found some, and concludes that similarity implies descent. That, of course, is simply illogical. His demonstration that distinctive Catholic beliefs were taken from Egyptian, Babylonian, or Roman religions will convince no one acquainted with ancient or ecclesiastical history. His proofs are nothing more than a listing of similarities, and even then the similarities are often strained. He unconsciously sums up his technique as he decries the Catholic tendency to erect magnificent churches with bell towers. Wanting to show the use of towers comes from the Babylonians and the Tower of Babel, he begins by saying, “If the reader will permit us a certain liberty at this point. . . .”³ But by “this point”, already a quarter of the way through the text, the book is

nothing but a concatenation of liberties, and Woodrow has taken them about as far as they can go.

Here is an example. In the chapter on the Mass, there is a photograph of the interior of St. Peter's. As the text explains, it "shows the altar of St. Peter's and [the] huge canopy (the baldachinum [sic])—ninety-five feet high—which is supported by four columns, twisted and slightly covered by branches. At the top of the columns—'on high above' the most important altar in Catholicism—are sun-images like those that were used in pagan worship."⁴

Here the reader glances to the opposing page. The photograph has superimposed on it three arrows. Two point to these "sun-images" at the top of the columns. The "sun-images" are so indistinct that Woodrow has penned in, next to the arrows, little "happy face" suns so the reader will understand what is supposed to be present. The third arrow points to the apse. There, "high on the wall, as the photograph also shows, is a huge and elaborate golden sunburst image which, from the entrance of the church, also appears 'above' the altar. . . . Interestingly enough, the great temple at Babylon also featured a golden sun-image."⁵

This is his proof: he sees what he thinks is a "sunburst" and promptly deduces that Catholicism borrowed from the Babylonian cults. It is safe to say that Woodrow has never been to the Vatican and has never examined a clear photograph of the interior of the basilica. If he had, he would not have committed such a blunder. What he thinks is an "elaborate golden sunburst" on the far wall of St. Peter's is nothing less than a representation of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove exuding rays of light. (Even fundamentalists use the dove motif in artwork.) The dove hovers over the reliquary said to contain St. Peter's chair. This is perhaps the most famous piece of art in the church—certainly the most eye-catching after the baldachin—and this blunder is representative of Woodrow's book. All in all, his contribution to the religious debate is a sorry example of "a detailed and historical account of how, when, why, and where ancient paganism was mixed with Christianity".

There is no need to refute each claim or explain each comparison made by Woodrow. His method is crude, and his book is unworthy of a point-by-point reply. A Catholic, if so inclined, could find in the mystery religions enough similarities to fundamentalism to prove that fundamentalism is really an offshoot of the cults, but the proof would be worthless. He could demonstrate that some mystery religions venerated a holy book as containing all religious

truth (their version of *sola scriptura*), just like fundamentalism. He could illustrate how the mystery religions claimed to give an “assurance of salvation”, just like fundamentalism. Such similarities would establish nothing. They would not imply descent.

When they look at the mystery religions, writers such as Woodrow think that by using Catholic terms as labels for pagan practices they have shown Catholicism’s origin. That simply is not logical, but, no matter how weak these arguments may be in the abstract, they influence people. Should they? No, because we should expect the true religion to be a fulfillment of, but not a complete contradiction of, mankind’s earlier stabs at religious truth. After all, each ancient religion had something true in it, even if what was true was buried under much that was false and even pernicious. On the positive side, ancient religions were remote preparations for Christ’s coming, which occurred in the “fullness of time”, when mankind had taken itself about as far as it could go on its own.

We should expect that the religion that is the fullness of truth, coming in the “fullness of time”, would incorporate the good points of earlier religions while rejecting their errors. Conversely, a religion that rejected not only the errors, but also the good points, of earlier religions would seem to be incomplete, as though it went too far in trying to remain pure, as though it threw out more than just the bathwater.

Chapter 13

Salvation

There is no more confusing topic, when fundamentalists and Catholics sit down to talk, than salvation. It goes beyond the standard question posed by fundamentalists: “Have you been saved?” It also means “don’t you wish you had an assurance of salvation?” Fundamentalists, along with most evangelicals, think they do. They are absolutely sure they will go to heaven immediately after death, and their assurance is no less lively than is the assurance of the Moslem participant in a jihad, who thinks he will be translated to seventh heaven (with all its houris) if he dies in battle.

Catholics are prone to label this presumption, but that really is not what it is. In Catholic theology, presumption is the attitude that one can gain heaven by his own merits or can gain pardon without repentance. It often manifests itself in a belief that one will be given an opportunity, at the last moment, to make amends—to get to confession, to say a perfect act of contrition—all based on the idea that one has led a reasonably good life. It is a kind of gambling, with the last throw of the dice guaranteed to come up right, and it is a sin because there is no reason to think things will happen that way, and to presume on one’s salvation is to play fast and loose with one’s soul. It is the most terminal form of Russian roulette.

Fundamentalists do not look at the matter as though they were playing a game. They conclude from the Bible that Christ actually promised that heaven is theirs in exchange for a remarkably simple act. All they have to do, at just one point in their lives, is “accept Christ as their personal Savior”. Then it is done. They may live exemplary lives thereafter, but living well is not crucial. It does not affect their salvation.

No matter what happens later, no matter how evilly they might live the remainder of their days, their salvation is assured. Granted, the Holy Spirit might punish them in this life for their sins (here fundamentalists take a rather Old Testament view on why one ought to be good—to avoid temporal evils, not to gain heaven, which is guaranteed no matter what). But in no way can

they undo their salvation, because it has nothing at all to do with the intrinsic worth of their souls or with what Catholics term actual sins.

It comes down to Galatians 2:20: “The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”. Christ is seen as one’s *personal* Savior, and that is why these words are a favorite with fundamentalists. For them, everything depends on an inner conviction that Christ died for them personally, and this verse is the ideal expression of it. Curiously, though, it stands alone in the apostle’s writings. Everywhere else he insists that Christ gave himself for *us*, and that he died for *us*. Paul was a churchman and sought salvation through the Church.

Kenneth E. Hagin, a Protestant evangelist, notes that this assurance of salvation comes through being “born again”: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3). “The new birth”, says Hagin, “is a necessity to being saved. Through the new birth you come into the right relationship with God.” There are many things that this new birth is not.

The new birth is not: confirmation—church membership—water baptism—the taking of sacraments—observing religious duties—an intellectual reception of Christianity—orthodoxy of faith—going to church—saying prayers—reading the Bible—being moral—being cultured or refined—doing good deeds—doing your best—nor any of the many other things some men are trusting in to save them.

Those who have obtained the new birth “did the one thing necessary—they accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior by repenting and turning to God with the whole heart as a little child”.¹ And that was all they needed to do.

For Catholics, salvation depends on the state of the soul at death. Christ has already redeemed us, unlocked the gates of heaven, as it were. (Note that redemption is not the same as salvation but is a necessary prelude.) He did his part, and now we have to cooperate by doing ours. If we are to pass through those gates, we have to be in the right spiritual state. We have to be spiritually alive. If a soul is merely in a natural state, without sanctifying grace, which is the grace that gives it supernatural life, then it is dead supernaturally and incapable of enjoying heaven. It will not be allowed through the gates. But if it has sanctifying grace, then heaven is guaranteed even if a detour through purgatorial purification is required first. The Church teaches that only souls that are objectively good and objectively pleasing to God merit heaven, and such souls are ones filled with sanctifying grace.

The saint who never committed a mortal sin and the lifelong sinner who did not stop sinning until he repented on his deathbed will each gain heaven,

although the one will have to be cleansed in the anteroom of purgatory. When they get to heaven, the one with the greater capacity for love will enjoy greater blessedness there, although each will enjoy it as fully as he is capable. As Catholics see it, anyone can achieve heaven, and anyone can lose it. The lifelong sinner can remain that to the very end—and he then becomes an eternally lost sinner. The apparent saint can throw away salvation at the last moment and end up no better off than the man who never did a good deed in his life. It all depends on how one enters death, which is why dying is by far one's most important act.

To some it seems arbitrary that God would put the main emphasis on one's last moments, which may come entirely by surprise, but this reality is tempered by the fact that everyone is given a chance to repent—and not just a chance, but a succession of chances. Grace abounds and can always be grabbed if only reached for. God does everything short of getting down on his knees in front of us and begging us to repent.

That, anyway, is the way the Catholic Church looks at the matter. For fundamentalists it makes no difference how one lives or ends his life. One could be another Mother Teresa, yet still be damned by not accepting Christ in the fundamentalists' senses—and there have been more than a few fundamentalist writers who have remarked that Mother Teresa is doomed, her (to them false) faith and earthly good works notwithstanding. On the other hand, one can sober up Sunday morning, go to church, heed the altar call, announce to the congregants an acceptance of Jesus as personal Lord and Savior, and, so long as that is really believed, all is well. Nothing can be done, no sin can be committed, no matter how heinous, that will forfeit salvation.

The reason is that "accepting Jesus" has nothing to do with turning a spiritually dead soul into a soul alive with sanctifying grace. The soul remains the same. Whether one has led a good life or a clearly wicked one, the soul is depraved, worthless, unable to stand on its own before God; it is a bottomless pit of sin, and a few more sins thrown in will not change its nature, just as taking a cleaning compound to it will not make it shine in the least. For the fundamentalist, sanctifying grace is a figment of Catholics' imaginations. Accepting Christ accomplishes one thing and one thing only. It makes God cover one's sinfulness. It makes him turn a blind eye to it. It is as though he hides the soul under a cloak. Any soul under this cloak is admitted to heaven, no matter how putrescent the reality beneath; no one without the

cloak, no matter how pristine, can enter the pearly gates.

The Reformers saw justification as a mere legal act by which God declares the sinner to be meriting heaven even though he remains in fact unjust and sinful. It is not a real eradication of sin, but a covering or nonimputation. It is not an inner renewal and a real sanctification, only an external application of Christ's justice. The Catholic Church, not surprisingly, understands justification differently. It sees it as a true eradication of sin and a true sanctification and renewal. The soul becomes objectively pleasing to God and so merits heaven. It merits heaven because now it is actually good. Scripture conceives of the forgiveness of sins as a real and complete removal of them. The words used are "blot out" (Ps 50:3), "clears away" (Ps 102:12), "blotting out" (Is 43:25), "takes away" (Jn 1:29). The few times the Bible mentions "covering" sins refer not to the forgiveness of sins by God, but to the forgiveness of one man's sins by another. Since we cannot actually forgive one another's sins (that is up to God), the best we can do is overlook them or "cover" them. Fundamentalism's notion that God "covers" our sins, but does not actually remove them, is an unfortunate misreading of the Bible that found its origin in Luther.

On the positive side, the Bible shows that justification is a rebirth. It is a generation of a supernatural life in a former sinner (Jn 3:5; Titus 3:5), a thorough inner renewal (Eph 4:23), and a real sanctification (1 Cor 6:11). The soul itself becomes beautiful and holy. It is not just an ugly soul hidden under a beautiful cloak. Because it is beautiful and holy, it can be admitted to heaven, where nothing unclean is allowed.

The assurance of salvation is perhaps the most enticing tenet of fundamentalism, particularly for people steeped, justly, in the guilt of their former lives.² There is no need for true reformation of character, although to some extent that follows because of the joy of being saved and the very real desire to live the kind of life one's fellow fundamentalists lead. Being "born again" can be so easy, and in that sense it is a relief. There is, at least, no need for an embarrassing confession of faults, whether to a congregation or to a priest in a dark cubicle or, sometimes worse, to oneself. One can avoid all particularities, admitting transgressions in general, forgetting them in particular. There is no need for a true examination of conscience. Once one accepts Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, the past ceases to exist; more precisely, it exists, but it does not at all matter. It does not have to be made up for or atoned for, and it does not even have to be built on.

Does this sound too good to be true? Take a look at what fundamentalists say. Wilson Ewin, the author of a booklet called *There Is Therefore Now No Condemnation*,³ says that “the person who places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Blood shed at Calvary is eternally secure. He can never lose his salvation. No personal breaking of God’s or man’s laws or commandments can nullify that status.” Ewin cites Hebrews 9:12, which states: “nor by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered the most holy place once and for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” “To deny the assurance of salvation would be to deny Christ’s perfect redemption”, argues Ewin, and this is something he can say only because he confuses redemption and salvation. The truth is that we are all redeemed—Christians, Jews, Moslems, animists in the darkest forests—but our salvation is conditional.

Ewin says that “no wrong act or sinful deed can ever affect the believer’s salvation. The sinner did nothing to merit God’s grace and likewise he can do nothing to demerit grace. True, sinful conduct always lessens one’s fellowship with Christ, limits his contribution to God’s work and can result in serious disciplinary action by the Holy Spirit.” (But how serious can this disciplinary action be, since the loss of heaven is not part of it?) “However,” Ewin continues, “none of the numerous examples of sin involving God’s people in the Bible ever teach or suggest a loss of salvation. The reason? Salvation is by grace from the moment of the new birth until physical death occurs.” He cites Romans 5:15: “But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more is the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”

What this means, explains Ewin, is that

the sinner must be declared righteous in order to be saved. The righteousness is imputed (credited) to the sinner who repents and trusts only in Christ and His shed Blood for salvation. The sinner never becomes righteous. He is simply declared righteous. The righteousness of Christ is credited to the sinner who trusts. This wonderful truth is expressed in these words, “But to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also described the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin (Rom 4:5-8).

Ewin says that

absolute assurance of salvation through imputed righteousness can never be broken by sin. The reason is simple—this righteousness has nothing to do with the keeping of God’s commandments

or moral law. The Bible says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe” (Rom, 3:21-22). God’s law or commandments were given to point out the fact of sin. The law shows the unregenerated man how wicked and lost he is before a Holy God. Keeping them or breaking them has no part in the believer’s possession of credited or imputed righteousness.

Ewin is particularly candid. Most fundamentalist writers state the assurance of salvation in a slightly different way. They do not emphasize the logical consequence of their position, that later sin, no matter how great, cannot undo one’s salvation. They agree with Ewin that assurance can be absolute, but instead of arguing that “no personal breaking of God’s or man’s laws or commandments can nullify” that assurance, they emphasize that someone who has been saved will not, in fact, sin as frequently as he did before accepting Christ as his personal Savior. (They do not say he will not sin at all.) Good works, for them as for Ewin, still have nothing to do with obtaining salvation, but they are a sign of election. Keith Green put it this way in his tract *Salvation According to Rome*:

Good works, of course, are pleasing to God and they have an important and necessary place in the life of the Christian. They naturally follow if one has true faith, and they are performed out of love and gratitude to God for the great salvation that He has bestowed. Good works, in other words, are not the cause and basis of salvation, but rather the fruits and proof of salvation. . . . [The Christian] performs them not to *get* saved, but because he *is* saved.

Some fundamentalists, perhaps uncomfortable with the cold logic of Ewin’s position and even with the softer version given by Green, go so far as to say that one can indeed lose salvation through later sin. They see the assurance of salvation as conditional and not absolute; it is dependent on the sinner keeping his part of a bargain. If the sinner continues to sin as before, he loses salvation, which is assured only so long as his repentance manifests itself outwardly in a reformed life. This is perilously close to the Catholic position and is grounded on Hebrews 10:26: “If we go on sinning wilfully, when once the full knowledge of truth has been granted to us, we have no further sacrifice for sin to look forward to; nothing but a terrible expectation of judgment, a fire that will eagerly consume the rebellious.” But this appears to be a minority position among fundamentalists, since most see it as no assurance at all and as making salvation a consequence of man’s works. The majority view is that salvation, if once achieved, simply cannot be lost, most fundamentalists being satisfied to say that the saved man either will not sin or

will not sin grievously. They may not carry their principles to their end and assert, with Ewin, that no sin can undo salvation; they just affirm that the saved man will not, in fact, commit any great sin. They avoid the charge of antinomianism by never admitting the saved man is, in a way, free to sin as he wishes, because they insist he will not wish to sin as he once did. (They seem disinclined to make an empirical investigation of the matter. They take no surveys to learn if there can be found a saved man who sins just as avidly as before, perhaps on the theory that any such continuation in sin would prove that he was never saved in the first place.)

From all this fundamentalists conclude that the New Testament, when speaking of living people as saints, means not that they will *become* saints in heaven *if* they follow God's commandments (this is the way Catholics understand Paul to have written), but that they are already, right now, saints, just like the saints in heaven. They have no more chance of not being allowed into heaven than have heaven's present residents of being thrown out. "You are no longer exiles, then, or aliens; the saints are your fellow citizens, you belong to God's household" (Eph 2:19).

Catholics look at such verses as merely Paul's expectations for his disciples; fundamentalists look at them as his acknowledgment of their existing status. Ronald Knox noted that there is no need "to suppose that all these high-sounding phrases which St. Paul uses about the Church refer to a collection of Saints already made perfect. To be sure, he calls all Christian folk 'saints'; it is his way; he sees us not as we are but as we ought to be. These 'saints' had to be warned against fornication, against thieving, against bitter schisms; it is the Church we know."⁴

The anonymous author of *Can Anyone Really Know for Sure?*⁵ says the "Lord Jesus wanted His followers to be so sure of their salvation that they would rejoice more in the expectation of heaven than in victories on earth. 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).' " The author admits, though, that there can be a false assurance: "The New Testament teaches us that genuine assurance is possible and desirable, but it also warns us that we can be deceived through a false assurance. Jesus declared: 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 7:21)." But one can find true assurance. "First, you must accept the fact of the finished work of Christ. Acknowledging your sin

(Rom 3:23, 6:23) and inability to save yourself (Eph 2:8, 9), place your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior (Acts 16:13). Having done that, you can know your salvation is real. That's true assurance!"

Is it really? Consider the case of a fundamentalist minister convicted of a heinous crime. What must the man in the pew conclude from his sin? That the pastor was just as saved as his congregants, who would have been embarrassed to attend a movie rated less than PG? Logically they would have to say precisely that, if the man had been saved according to the fundamentalist scheme of things, even if his experience of salvation had come years before, even if his last years had been ones of perversity. From the fundamentalists' perspective, one can do nothing to lose salvation.

Putting aside the question whether this is a positive invitation to antinomianism—after all, if one is guaranteed heaven, why not have fun here below while the having's good?—the congregants naturally wonder whether their pastor was ever saved at all. No matter what the theory might be, it rankles to think a saved person would do such a thing or that a saved person would sin at all. One might call it the fundamentalist equivalent of Catholics wondering whether the man in the chasuble was ever validly ordained. A man never validly ordained as a priest cannot confect the sacraments, even if he goes through the motions perfectly. A fundamentalist pastor who himself was never saved—well, that is a disturbing thought.

It is a thought that leads to one of two conclusions. Either this pastor was never saved in the first place, although everyone thought he was—this implies one can never tell from outward actions who is saved and who is not—or he was indeed saved but can now sin with impunity. But that is repugnant to common moral convictions. A pastor known for years by his congregants would be presumed saved; if they could be fooled, couldn't the man have fooled himself? If he, with some formal religious training, thought he was born again when he was not, how is the average fundamentalist to know whether his conversion "took"?

How can any fundamentalist know his salvation experience was real, that it "worked"? He cannot. Leading a good life immediately after being born again proves nothing, since one might sin grievously at a later time. Leading a bad life right after apparently being saved does not disprove it, since one's sins are immaterial.

Either way, the doctrine seems nearly useless because, when reflected on seriously, it seems to make impossible the very assurance it is supposed to

give.

Besides, there are verses that call the whole notion of the assurance of salvation into question. “I buffet my own body, and make it my slave; or I, who have preached to others, may myself be rejected as worthless”, says Paul (1 Cor 9:27). This follows the well-known verses that speak of running a race, and the race, of course, is the race of life, the finish line being entrance into heaven. The author of the Radio Bible Class booklet says that Paul “did not want to lose the reward for service through failing to satisfy his Lord; he was not afraid of losing his salvation”. While that interpretation seems to strain the passage a bit, it is not entirely unreasonable, but 1 Corinthians 9:27 should not be read in isolation.

Compare it to Philippians 2:12; “Beloved, you have always shown yourselves obedient; and now that I am at a distance, not less but much more than when I am present, you must work to earn your salvation, in anxious fear.” Other translations say “work out your own salvation in fear and trembling”. This is not the language of self-confident assurance. What is more, Paul tells us, “All of us have a scrutiny to undergo before Christ’s judgement-seat, for each to reap what his mortal life has earned, good or ill, according to his deeds” (2 Cor 5:10), and God “will award to every man what his acts have deserved” (Rom 2:6). But if the only act of consequence is the born-again experience, what difference do the other acts make? The apostle notes that “there is graciousness, then, in God, and there is also severity. His severity is for those who have fallen away, his graciousness is for thee, only so long as thou dost continue in his grace; if not, thou too shalt be pruned away” (Rom 11:22). Paul wrote this to people who were already “saved”, in a state of grace—a grace they could lose, becoming “unsaved”.

These verses demonstrate that we indeed will be judged by what we do and not just by the one act of whether we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior. Yet it is not to be thought that being do-gooders is sufficient. The Bible is quite clear that we are saved by faith. The Reformers were quite right in saying this, and to this extent they merely repeated the constant teaching of Church. Where they erred was in saying that we are saved by faith alone. If it is true that we are judged by our acts (presuming first we have faith), then it is not enough to say that faith alone, in the traditional Protestant sense of fiduciary faith—trust in Christ’s promises—can be enough. If it were, we would not have to worry about our other acts.

Recall that Nicodemus was told by Christ that he must be reborn by water

and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). In the fundamentalist scheme of things, despite their protestations, the water reduces to nothing at all. For Catholics the whole phrase “water and the Holy Spirit” is one; it means baptism. For fundamentalists only the second part of the phrase is operative. The Holy Spirit does his job by convicting us of sin and showing us we need to put our faith in Christ. The water is forgotten. If one dies after being born again, but before being baptized, one gets to heaven anyway. Although fundamentalists look at baptism as an ordinance, it is not necessary for salvation. There is no real connection between baptism and salvation because baptism as such does nothing. It is the intellectual acceptance of Christ that does it all.

Just as baptism, then, is not actually needed for salvation, the acceptance of Christ as personal Lord and Savior being enough, so no other act, no matter how good, can assist salvation. This flies in the face of the passages from Paul. Another way to look at it is this. Consider Romans 5:2: “We are confident in the hope of attaining glory as the sons of God.” If we, having been born again in fundamentalism’s sense, are now sure of heaven, and if we know nothing can deprive us of it, then we have no reason to hope because we *know* that heaven is ours. But “our salvation is founded upon the hope of something”, says Paul. “Hope would not be hope at all if its object were in view; how could man still hope for something which he sees?” (Rom 8:24). We hope for heaven, however well disposed we might be spiritually, because we know we still have a chance to lose it.

“Are you saved?” asks the fundamentalist. “I am redeemed,” answers the Catholic, “and like the apostle Paul I am working out my salvation in fear and trembling, with hopeful confidence—but not with a false assurance—and I do all this as the Church has taught, unchanged, from the time of Christ.”

Chapter 14

Baptism of Infants

Fundamentalists say the Catholic Church errs in baptizing infants. Baptism, they say, is for adults only, and it is to be administered only after an adult has undergone a “born-again” experience—that is, after he has “accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior”. At the instant of acceptance, when he is “born again”, the adult becomes a Christian, one of the elect, and his salvation is assured. Baptism follows, although it actually does nothing itself to secure salvation; one who dies before being baptized, but after “being saved”, goes to heaven anyway.

Baptism, for fundamentalists, is not a sacrament, but an ordinance. It does not produce the grace it symbolizes; it is merely a symbol, a public manifestation of the adult’s conversion. Since only an adult can be converted, baptism is not appropriate for infants or for young children below the age of reason. Most fundamentalists say infants and young children are automatically saved, no matter what. Only once a person reaches the age of reason and has sinned does he need to “accept Jesus” in order to reach heaven.

The Catholic Church has always understood baptism differently, of course, understanding it as a sacrament that accomplishes several things, the first of which is the remission of sin, both original sin and actual sin: in the case of infants and young children, only original sin, since they are incapable of actual sin; in the case of older persons, both. “Repent, Peter said to them, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to have your sins forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children, and for all those, however far away, whom the Lord our God calls to himself “(Acts 2:38-39). We also read: “Rise up, and receive baptism, washing away your sins at the invocation of his name” (Acts 22:16). These commands are universal, not restricted to adults.

Along with this forgiveness of sins comes an infusion of grace. It is this grace that makes the soul spiritually alive and capable of enjoying heaven.

There are other benefits, too, such as the elimination of punishment due for sins and the right to special graces necessary to enable the baptized to fulfill his baptismal promises.

In the Middle Ages, some groups, such as the Waldenses and Catharists, rejected infant baptism. Later, the Anabaptists (“re-baptizers”) echoed them in saying infants are incapable of being baptized validly. But the Catholic Church has always held that Christ’s law applies to infants as well as adults. Jesus said that no one can enter heaven unless he has been born again of water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). His words can be taken to apply to anyone capable of having a right to his Kingdom. He asserted such a right even for children: “Let the children be, do not keep them back from me; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Mt 19:14).

Fundamentalists say this verse does not apply to young children or infants since it implies the persons being referred to are able to approach Christ on their own. (Older translations have “Suffer the little children to come unto me”, which seems to suggest they can do so under their own power.) Fundamentalists conclude the passage refers only to older, ambulatory children, those capable of sin. But the parallel text says, “Then they brought little children to him” (Lk 18:15), and following this are the same words as in Matthew 19:14. What is more, some translations even use the term “infants”. Indeed, in the Greek the words refer to infants in arms, little children who are unable to approach Christ on their own. Besides, Paul notes that baptism has replaced circumcision (Col 2:11-12). Of course, it was mainly infants who were circumcised under the Old Law; circumcision of adults was rare, there being few converts to Judaism. If Paul, in making this parallel, meant to exclude infants from baptism, it is strange that he did not say so.

It is not often admitted by fundamentalists that nowhere does the Bible actually say baptism is to be restricted to adults. They just conclude that is what it should be taken as meaning, even if the text does not explicitly support such a view. Naturally enough, the people whose baptisms we read about in Scripture are adults because they were converted as adults. This makes sense, because Christianity was just starting out and there were no “cradle Christians”, no people brought up from childhood in Christian homes.

One might ask, Does the Bible ever say that infants or young children *can* be baptized? The indications are fairly clear. Lydia was converted by Paul’s preaching. “She was baptized, with all her household” (Acts 16:15). The jailer of Paul and Silas, who was about to commit suicide when they were

miraculously freed from their imprisonment, was converted by them. We are told that “without delay he and all his were baptized” (Acts 16:33). And in his greetings to the Corinthians, Paul recalled that, “Yes, and I did baptize the household of Stephanas” (1 Cor 1:16).

In all these cases, whole households or families were baptized. Presumably this means more than just the spouse: at least the children, probably also servants, if the household had any. But would an impoverished jailer, about to kill himself for what he took to be malfeasance, have servants at all, being, as he was, near the bottom of the social ladder? Not likely. “He and all his” must refer to himself plus at least two others; if it referred to just himself and his wife, we would expect to read “without delay he and his wife were baptized”, but we read “without delay he and all his were baptized”.

The natural implication is that the jailer had at least one child who was baptized, too. A similar argument can be made in the other cases. Granted, we cannot tell the age of the children; they may have been past the age of reason, not infants. Then again, they could have been babes in arms. More probably, there were both younger and older children. Even though the scriptural evidence is not absolutely conclusive on the issue, it leans in favor of infant baptism. At any rate, there is nothing in the New Testament that says infants and young children are unsuited to baptism.

The present Catholic attitude accords perfectly with early Christian practices. Origen, for instance, wrote in the third century that “the Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism also to infants.”¹ John Chrysostom said, “For this reason we baptize even infants, though they do not have sins [of their own]: so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness, adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be his members.”² The Council of Carthage, in 252, condemned the opinion that infants should be withheld from baptism until the eighth day after birth.³

Now these citations—they could be multiplied—do not themselves prove, beyond doubt, that baptism of infants was authorized by Christ, but they do refer to a practice that was already old at an early date. After all, the Council of Carthage was not adjudicating a dispute about infant baptism as such, but was deciding at what point infants should be baptized. No one, apparently, was claiming the practice was contrary to Scripture or Tradition. It was as though they were saying, “We all agree infants can be baptized and that infant baptism was practiced from the first, but exactly *when* should they be

baptized?” Another telling point: If infant baptism was opposed to the religious practices of the first believers, why do we have no record of early Christian writers condemning it?

Fundamentalists do not pay much attention to the historical situation. They deflect appeals to history by saying baptism requires faith and children are incapable of having faith. Thus, no baptism for them. It is true that Christ prescribed instruction and actual faith for adult converts (Mt 28:19-20), but his general law on the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation (Jn 3:5) puts no restriction on the subject of baptism. Although infants are included in the law, they cannot be expected to meet requirements that cannot be met because of their age. They cannot be expected to be instructed and have faith when they are incapable of receiving instruction or manifesting faith.

The fundamentalist position on infant baptism is a consequence not of the Bible's strictures, but of the logic of fundamentalism's notion of salvation. Although the Bible is not as clear on the issue as we might wish, certainly what it says leans toward the Catholic position, which is seconded by early Christian practice and writings. Fundamentalists ignore all that because they must preserve their concept of how salvation is obtained. They see salvation as coming not through an infusion of grace, which is the Catholic position, but through an acceptance of Jesus as one's personal Lord and Savior. Since only an adult can be saved in this way, they conclude baptism is wasted on infants and young children—thus their opposition to the Catholic position.

Chapter 15

The Forgiveness of Sins

All pardon for sins comes, ultimately, from Calvary, but how is this pardon to be received by individuals? How are people who sin today to obtain forgiveness? Did Christ leave us any means within the Church to take away sin? The Bible says he gave us two means. Baptism was given to take away the sin inherited from Adam (original sin) and any sins (called actual sins, because they come from our own acts) committed before baptism. For sins committed after baptism, a different sacrament is needed. It has been called penance, confession, and reconciliation, each word emphasizing one of its aspects.

During his life, Christ forgave sins, as in the case of the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8:1-11) and the woman who anointed his feet (Lk 7:48). He exercised this power as *man*, “to convince you that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins while he is on earth” (Mk 2:10). Since he would not always be with the Church, visibly, Christ gave this power to other men so the Church, which is the continuation of his presence throughout time, would be able to offer forgiveness to future generations. He gave his power to the apostles, and it was necessarily a communicable power, one that could be passed on to their successors and agents, since, obviously, the apostles would not always be on earth either. “He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit; when you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound” (Jn 20:22-23).¹

Christ told the apostles to follow his example: “As the Father sent me, so am I sending you” (Jn 20:21). “What he did, they were to do. Just as the apostles were to carry Christ’s message to the whole world, so were they to carry his forgiveness: “I promise you, all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and all that you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 18:18). This power was not to be used as being from themselves, but as being from God: “This, as always, is God’s doing; it is he who, through Christ, has reconciled us to himself, and allowed us to minister this

reconciliation of his to others” (2 Cor 5:18). Indeed, confirms Paul, “We are Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Cor 5:20).

It is said by some that any power given to the apostles died with them. Not so. Some powers, certainly, must have, such as universal jurisdiction. But the powers absolutely necessary to maintain the Church as a living, spiritual society had to be passed down, generation to generation. If they ceased, the Church would cease, except as a quaint abstraction. Christ ordered the apostles to “make disciples of all nations”. It would take time, much time. He promised his assistance”. “And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Mt 28:19-20).

If the apostles and disciples believed that Christ instituted a priesthood that included the power to forgive sins in his stead, we would expect the successors of the apostles—that is, the bishops—and Christians of later years to act as though such power was legitimately and habitually exercised. On the other hand, if the priestly forgiveness of sins was what fundamentalists term it, an “invention”, and if it was something foisted on the young Church by ecclesiastical or political leaders, we would expect to find records of protest. In fact, in early Christian writings we find no sign of protests concerning priestly forgiveness of sins. Quite the contrary. We find confession to a priest was accepted as consistent with the original deposit of faith.

If the Church itself instituted confession (or “auricular confession”, as some like to emphasize: private confession “to the ear” of a priest), and if the sacrament did not stem directly from Christ, it should be possible to point to a date for its “invention”. Some opponents of the Catholic position think they can do that. Loraine Boettner claims “auricular confession to a priest instead of to God” was instituted in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council.² This is an extreme example, even for a committed anti-Catholic. There are not many people with the gumption to place the “invention” of confession so late, since there is so much early Christian writing—a good portion of it a thousand and more years before that Council—that refers to the practice of confession as something already long established. One cannot very well “invent” something that has been around a millennium and more.

Actually, the Fourth Lateran Council did not introduce confession, although it did discuss it. To combat the lax morals of the time (morals are always more lax than they should be, at any time in history; that is one consequence of original sin), the Council more specifically defined the already-existing duty to confess one’s sins by saying Catholics should

confess at least once a year. To issue an official decree about a sacrament is hardly the same as “inventing” that sacrament.

The earliest Christian writings, such as the first-century *Didache*, are indefinite on the procedure to be used for the forgiveness of sins, but a self-accusation is listed as a part of the Church’s requirement by the time of Irenaeus.³ The sacrament of penance is clearly in use, but it is not yet clear from Irenaeus just how, or to whom, confession is to be made. Is it privately, to the priest, or before the whole congregation with the priest presiding? The one thing we can say for sure is that the sacrament is understood by Irenaeus to go back to the beginning of the Church.

Slightly later Christian writers, such as Origen,⁴ Cyprian,⁵ and Aphraates,⁶ are quite clear in saying confession is to be made to a priest. (In fact, in their writings the whole process of penance is termed *exhomologesis*, which simply means confession: the confession was seen as the main part of the sacrament.) Cyprian writes that the forgiving of sins can take place only “through the priests”.⁷ Ambrose makes things clear, saying, “this right is given to priests only”.⁸ Pope Leo I says absolution can be obtained only through the prayers of the priests.⁹ These utterances are not taken as anything novel, but as reminders of accepted belief. We have no record of anyone objecting, of anyone claiming these men were pushing an “invention”.

Note that the power given to the apostles by Christ was twofold: to forgive sins or to hold them bound, which means to retain them unforgiven. Several things follow from this. First, the apostles could not know what sins to forgive, what not to forgive, unless they were first told the sins by the sinner. This implies confession. Second, their authority was not merely to proclaim that God had already forgiven sins or that he would forgive sins if there were proper repentance.

Such interpretations do not account for the distinction between forgiving and retaining—nor do they account for the importance given to the utterance in John 20:22-23. If God has already forgiven all a man’s sins or will forgive them all, past and future, on a single act of repentance, then it makes little sense to tell the apostles they have been given the power to “retain” sins, since forgiveness would be an all-or-nothing thing and nothing could be “retained”. If forgiveness can be partial, how is one to tell which sins have been forgiven, which not, in the absence of a priestly decision? One cannot very well rely on gut feelings. No, the biblical passages make sense, hang together, only if the apostles and their successors were given a real authority.

Still, some people are not convinced. One is Paul Juris, a former priest, now a fundamentalist, who has written a pamphlet on this subject.¹⁰ The pamphlet is widely distributed by organizations opposed to Catholicism. The cover describes the work as “a study of John 20:23, a much misunderstood and misused portion of Scripture pertaining to the forgiveness of sins”. Juris begins by mentioning “two main schools of thought”, the first being the Catholic position, the second the fundamentalist. He puts the fundamentalist position this way: “In this setting and with these words, Jesus was commissioning his disciples, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to go and preach the Gospel to every creature. Those who believed the Gospel, their sins would be forgiven. Those who refused to believe the Gospel, their sins would be retained.”

He correctly notes that “among Christians, it is generally agreed that regular confession of one’s sins is obviously necessary to remain in good relationship with God. So the issue is not whether we should or should not confess our sins. Rather, the real issue is: How does God say that our sins are forgiven or retained?” Juris says, “Since John 20:23 can be interpreted in more than one way, it will be necessary to examine this portion of Scripture not only in its context, but also in the light of other Scriptures pertaining directly to this subject. And, since we know that God’s Word never contradicts itself, what better way could we arrive at the true meaning of this verse of Scripture, than by comparing it with other Scriptures?”

This sounds fine, on the surface, but this apparently reasonable approach masks what really happens next. Juris engages in verse slinging, listing as many verses as he can find that refer to God forgiving sins, in hope the sheer mass of verses will settle the question. Yet none of the verses he lists specifically interprets John 20:23, and none contradicts the Catholic interpretation. For instance, he cites verses such as these: “Be it known therefore to you, brethren, that through him [Christ] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and in him everyone who believes is acquitted of all the things of which you could not be acquitted by the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39); “And he said to them, Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned” (Mk 16:15-16).

Juris says verses such as these demonstrate that “all that was left for the disciples to do was to ‘go’ and ‘proclaim’ this wonderful good news (the Gospel) to all men. As they proclaimed this good news of the Gospel, those

who believed the Gospel, their sins would be forgiven. Those who rejected (did not believe) the Gospel, their sins would be retained.” This is not a proof; these verses, and the others he lists, do not interpret John 20:23. Juris does nothing more than show the Bible says God will forgive sins, something no one doubts. He does not remotely prove that John 20:23 is equivalent to a command to “go” and to “preach”. He sidesteps the evident problems in the fundamentalist interpretation of the verse.

It takes no scholar to see the passage does not say anything about preaching the good news. Jesus tells the apostles that “when you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven”. Nothing here about preaching—that is handled elsewhere, such as in Matthew 28:19 and related verses. Instead, Jesus is telling the apostles that they have been empowered to do something. He does not say, “When God forgives men’s sins, they are forgiven.” It is hardly necessary to say that. He uses the second person plural: “you”. He talks about the apostles forgiving, not preaching. When he refers to retaining sins, he uses the same form: “When you hold them bound, they are held bound.” There it is again, “you”.

What Juris does—his pamphlet is a good example of this—is to select verses, all that he can find, that mention the same general topic, the forgiveness of sins. Since the other verses he gives, about two dozen of them, speak about forgiveness by God, he concludes, improperly, that God could not have appointed men as his agents. The best Juris can do, ultimately, is to assert that John 20:23 means the apostles were given authority only to proclaim the forgiveness of sins—but asserting is not proving.

Granted, his is a technique that works. Many readers get the impression the fundamentalist interpretation has been shown to be true. After all, if one proposes to interpret one verse and accomplishes that by listing irrelevant verses that refer to something other than the specific point in controversy, lazy readers will conclude an impressive array of evidence has been marshaled. All they have to do is count the citations. Here is one for the Catholics, they say, looking at John 20:22-23, but ten or twenty or thirty for the fundamentalists. The fundamentalists must be right! They do not detect that the ten or twenty or thirty verses are a smokescreen.

Juris’ technique illustrates that fundamentalists do not really “find” their doctrines through a literal reading of the Bible. They approach the Bible with already-held views, their own tradition, one might say, and they use the Bible to substantiate these views. Some can be substantiated easily, such as the

reality of the Resurrection. Others cannot be substantiated by Scripture at all, because they are contrary to Scripture. In these cases, Scripture is either ignored or interpreted in an awkwardly metaphorical sense, as with John 6, where the Eucharist is promised, or as with John 20:22-23, where the sacrament of penance is established.

Another point. Fundamentalist writers often ignore John 20:22-23 since it is troublesome. They shift focus, insisting there is “only one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 2:5). True, but they draw an improper inference. Christ was at liberty to decide how his mediation would be applied to us. It is a question of fact. Naturally enough, the one who is offended does the forgiving. When we sin, we offend God, so it is he to whom we look for forgiveness. But he can arrange his forgiveness either personally and immediately or through an agent. Which did he declare to be the usual (though not exclusive) way to forgive sins: by direct application to him or by means of confessing to a priest? If the first, then John 20:22-23 becomes unintelligible. The words would not remotely mean what they so clearly seem to say.

Is the Catholic who confesses his sins to a priest any better off than the non-Catholic who confesses straight to God? Yes. First, he seeks forgiveness the way Christ intended it to be sought.

Second, by confessing to a priest the Catholic learns a lesson in humility, which is conveniently avoided when one confesses only through private prayer—and how we all desire to escape humbling experiences! Third, the Catholic receives sacramental graces the non-Catholic does not get; through the sacrament of penance not only are sins forgiven, but graces are obtained. Fourth, and in some ways the most important, the Catholic is assured that his sins are forgiven; he does not have to rely on a subjective “feeling”. Lastly, the Catholic can also obtain sound advice on avoiding sin in the future, while the non-Catholic praying in private remains uninstructed.

True, Christ could have decided that sins would normally be forgiven merely through private prayer, but he knew the world would grow old before his return. With himself gone, he wanted his followers to have every possible consolation, every possible assurance, every possible help, so he instituted the sacrament through which we are reconciled to God. During his lifetime Christ sent out his followers to do his work. Just before he left this world, he gave the apostles special authority, commissioning them to make God’s forgiveness present to all lands, to all people, and the whole Christian world

accepted this until just a few centuries ago. If there is an “invention” here, it is not the sacrament of penance, but the notion that the priestly forgiveness of sins is not to be found in the Bible or in early Christian history.

Chapter 16

Purgatory

In 1769 James Boswell had this exchange with Samuel Johnson:

Boswell: “What do you think, Sir, of purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?”

Johnson: “Why, Sir, it is a very harmless doctrine. They are of the opinion that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve everlasting punishment, nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and therefore that God is graciously pleased to allow a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see, Sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this.”

Boswell: “But then, Sir, their Masses for the dead?”

Johnson: “Why, Sir, if it be at once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for them, as for our brethren of mankind who are yet in this life.”¹

Although Johnson was no “Catholic”, he recognized that the doctrine of purgatory is not at odds with other tenets of Christianity. In fact, as he may have known, there is considerable scriptural warrant for it, even if the doctrine is not explicitly set out in the Bible.

The doctrine can be stated briefly. Purgatory is a state of purification, where the soul that has fully repented of its sins but has not fully expiated them has removed from itself the last elements of uncleanness. In purgatory all remaining love of self is transformed into love of God. At death one’s soul goes to heaven, if it is completely fit for heaven; to purgatory, if it is not quite fit for heaven, but not worthy of condemnation; or to hell, if it is completely unfit for heaven. Purgatory is a temporary state. Everyone who enters it will get to heaven, and, after the last soul leaves purgatory for heaven, purgatory will cease to exist. There will remain only heaven and hell.

When we die, we undergo what is called the particular, or individual, judgment. We are judged instantly and receive our reward, for good or ill. We know at once what our final destiny will be. At the end of time, though, when the last people have died, there will come the general judgment to

which the Bible refers. In it all our sins will be revealed. Augustine said, in *The City of God*, that “temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment”.² It is between the particular and general judgments, then, that the soul expiates its sins: “I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny” (Lk 12:59). If full expiation occurs before the general judgment, the soul is released from purgatory and goes to heaven.

Fundamentalists note that biblical references to the judgment refer only to heaven and hell. Quite true. That is because most of the references are to the general judgment, when all will be judged at once (which means, for those who died earlier and already underwent an individual judgment, a kind of rejudging, but one that is public). It is at the general judgment that the justice and mercy of God will be demonstrated to all. Opponents of the Catholic position are generally silent about what happens to the souls of people who die long before the Last Day. There is no hint from Scripture that these souls remain in suspended animation. No, “men die only once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27). Judgment is immediate—which, by the way, is one reason why reincarnation is impossible. It is here, between individual judgment and general judgment, that a soul may find itself in purgatory.

Fundamentalists are fond of saying the Catholic Church “invented” the doctrine of purgatory, but they have trouble saying just when. Most professional anti-Catholics—the ones who make their living attacking “Romanism”—seem to place the blame on Pope Gregory the Great, who reigned from 590-604. That hardly accounts for the request of Monica, mother of Augustine, who asked her son, in the fourth century, to remember her soul in his Masses. This would have made no sense if she thought her soul could not be helped by prayers, if she thought there was no possibility of being somewhere other than heaven or hell.

Still less does the ascription of the doctrine to Gregory account for the graffiti in the catacombs, where the earliest Christians, during the persecutions of the first three centuries, recorded prayers for the dead. Indeed, some of the earliest noninspired Christian writings, such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (second century), refer to the Christian custom of praying for the dead. Such prayers would have been made only if Christians believed in purgatory, even if they did not use that name for it.

No, the historical argument breaks down. Whenever a date is set for the

“invention” of purgatory, one can point to something to show the doctrine was already old many years before that date. Besides, if at some point the doctrine was pulled out of a clerical hat, why does ecclesiastical history record no protest? A study of the history of doctrines shows Christians in the first centuries were up in arms, sometimes quite literally, if anyone suggested the least change in beliefs. They were extremely conservative people, their test of the truth of a doctrine being the question: Was this believed by our ancestors? Surely belief in purgatory would be considered a great change, if it had not been believed from the first—so where are the records of protests? They do not exist, and they never existed. There is no hint, in the oldest writings available to us (or in later ones, for that matter), that “true believers” in the immediate postapostolic years complained about purgatory as a novel doctrine. They must have understood that the oral teaching of the apostles, what Catholics call Tradition, and the Bible not only did not contradict the doctrine but endorsed it.

It is no wonder, then, that professional anti-Catholics spend little time on the history of the belief. (Who can blame them for avoiding an unpleasant subject?) They prefer to claim, instead, that the Bible speaks only of heaven and hell. Wrong again. It speaks quite plainly of a third place, where Christ went after his death, the place commonly called the Limbo of the Fathers, where the just who died before the Redemption were waiting for heaven to be opened to them (1 Pet 3:19). This place was neither heaven nor hell.

Even if the Limbo of the Fathers was not purgatory, its existence shows that a temporary, intermediate state is not contrary to Scripture. Look at it this way. If the Limbo of the Fathers *was* purgatory, then this one verse directly teaches the existence of purgatory. If the Limbo of the Fathers was a different temporary state, then the Bible at least says such a state can exist. It at least proves there can be more than just heaven and hell.

Fundamentalists also say, “We cannot find the word purgatory in Scripture.” True, but that is hardly the point. The words Trinity and Incarnation are not in Scripture either, yet those doctrines are taught in it. Likewise, Scripture teaches that purgatory exists, even if it does not use that word and even if 1 Peter 3:19 refers to a place other than purgatory.

Christ refers to the sinner for whom “there is no forgiveness, either in this world or in the world to come” (Mt 12:32). This implies expiation can occur after death. Paul tells us that at the day of judgment each man’s work will be tried. This trial happens after death. What happens if a man’s work fails the

test? “He will be the loser; and yet he himself will be saved, though only as men are saved by passing through fire” (1 Cor 3:15). Now this loss, this penalty, cannot refer to consignment to hell, since no one is saved there; and heaven cannot be meant, since there is no suffering (“fire”) there. Purgatory alone explains this passage. Then there is the Bible’s approbation of prayers for the dead: “It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they might be loosed from their sins” (2 Mace 12:46). Prayers are not needed by those in heaven, and they cannot help those in hell. That means some people must be in a third place, at least temporarily.³

Why would anyone go to purgatory? To be cleansed. “Nothing unclean shall enter heaven” (Rev 21:27). Anyone who has not completely expiated his sins—that is, not just had them forgiven, but “made up” for them, been punished for them—in this life is, to some extent, “unclean”. Through repentance he may have gained the grace needed to qualify for heaven (which is to say his soul is spiritually alive), but that is not enough. He needs to be cleansed completely. By not admitting the doctrine of purgatory, one necessarily implies that even the slightest defilement results in the loss of the soul, yet even here below not every crime is a capital offense: “Not all sin is deadly” (1 Jn 5:17).

Fundamentalists claim, as an article in Jimmy Swaggart’s magazine *The Evangelist* put it, that “Scripture clearly reveals that all the demands of divine justice on the sinner have been completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It also reveals that Christ has totally redeemed, or purchased back, that which was lost. The advocates of a purgatory (and the necessity of prayer for the dead) say, in effect, that the redemption of Christ was incomplete. . . . It has all been done for us by Jesus Christ, there is nothing to be added or done by man.”⁴ This presumes there is a contradiction between the Redemption and our suffering in expiation for our sins. There is not, whether that suffering is in this life or in the next. Paul said he rejoiced “in my sufferings for you, and [I] fill up those things that are wanting in the suffering of Christ” (Col 1:24). Ronald Knox explained this passage by noting that “the obvious meaning is that Christ’s sufferings, although fully satisfactory on behalf of our sins, leave us under a debt of honour, as it were, to repay them by sufferings of our own.”⁵ Paul did not imply there was something lacking in the Redemption, that Christ could not pull it off on his own, and no fundamentalist misreads Colossians 1:24 that way. Analogously, it is not contrary to the Redemption to say we must suffer for our sins; it is a matter of justice. We can suffer here,

or hereafter, or in both places, as Augustine wrote.

Some say, “God does not demand expiation after having forgiven sins.” Tell that to King David. When David repented, God sent Nathan with a message for him: “The Lord on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the Lord by this deed, the child born to you must surely die” (2 Sam 12:14). Even after David’s sin was forgiven, he had to undergo expiation. Can we expect less? Fundamentalists think the answer is yes, because Christ obviated the need for any expiation on our part, but the Bible nowhere teaches that. Having one’s sins forgiven is not the same thing as having the punishment for them wiped out.

The main reason for opposition to purgatory is that it cannot coexist with fundamentalism’s notion of salvation. For fundamentalists, salvation comes by “accepting Christ as one’s personal Savior”. Aside from that one act of acceptance, no acts—meaning no good deeds and no sins—make any difference with respect to one’s salvation. If one is “born again” in fundamentalism’s sense, salvation has already occurred, and nothing can keep one from heaven. If not “born again”, one is damned. In fundamentalism’s scheme of things, purgatory would be superfluous, since cleansing before entering heaven would be unnecessary, on the notion that every soul is unclean and God ignores the uncleanness by “covering” the soul’s sinfulness.

Purgatory makes sense only if there is a requirement that a soul not just be *declared* to be clean, but actually *be* clean. After all, if a guilty soul is merely “covered”, if its sinful state still exists but is officially ignored, then, for all the protestations that may be given, it is still a guilty soul. It is still unclean. A man who has not bathed in a month is not cleansed merely by putting on clean clothes; clean clothes will not remove the dirt. Likewise, “covering” a soul will not purify it; its dirty state is merely hidden from view. Catholic theology takes literally the notion that “nothing unclean shall enter heaven”. From this it is inferred that a dirty soul, even if “covered”, remains a dirty soul and is not fit for heaven. It needs to be cleansed or purged of its dirtiness. The purging comes in purgatory.

There is another argument commonly used against purgatory. It is that the Catholic Church makes money from the doctrine. Without purgatory, the claim goes, the Church would go broke. Any number of anti-Catholic books, from the tamest to the most bizarre, claim the Church owes the majority of its wealth to this doctrine. The numbers do not add up.

When a Catholic requests a memorial Mass for the dead—that is, a Mass said for the benefit of someone in purgatory—it is customary to give the parish a stipend, on the principle that the laborer is worth his hire (Lk 10:7) and those who preside at the altar share the altar’s offerings (1 Cor 9:13-14). In the United States, a stipend is commonly around five dollars, but the indigent do not have to pay anything, and no parish maintains a “schedule of fees”. A few people, of course, freely offer more. On average, though, a parish can expect to receive something less than five dollars by way of stipend for each memorial Mass said. These Masses are usually said on weekdays.

Look at what happens on a Sunday. There are often hundreds of people at Mass. In a crowded parish, there may be thousands. Many families and individuals deposit five dollars or more into the collection basket; others deposit less. A few give much more. A parish might have four or five or six Masses on a Sunday. The total from the Sunday collections far outstrips the paltry amount received from the memorial Masses. The facts are that no Catholic parish gets rich from Mass stipends—or even gets much at all. .

In interpreting the Bible, in determining whether the doctrine of purgatory contradicts or confirms what is found in its pages, we come on a recurring question: “Who is to decide?” It hardly suffices to say, “Let the Bible itself decide”, since it is the interpretation of the Bible that is in question, and no book, not even the Bible, can be self-interpreting. Either we interpret it ourselves, using our own resources, or we listen to the word of a divinely appointed interpreter, if one has been established. Catholics hold that Christ empowered the Church to give infallible interpretations of the Bible. “I have still much to say to you, but it is beyond your reach as yet. It will be for him, the truth-giving Spirit, when he comes, to guide you in all truth” (Jn 16:12). This Jesus said to the apostles.

This takes us, of course, to the rule of faith—is it to be found in the Bible alone or in the Bible and Tradition, as handed down by the Church? That question was examined in an earlier chapter, and there is no need to repeat the arguments here. The reader just needs to keep in mind that the controversy about purgatory is really a controversy about much more than purgatory. Purgatory has just been a convenient warring ground. The ultimate disagreement concerns the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. If fundamentalists understood why that doctrine will not wash—why, in fact, it is contrary to Scripture—they would have little difficulty in accepting purgatory and other

Catholic beliefs, such as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, which are not explicitly stated in the Bible.

Chapter 17

Peter and the Papacy

Like other Protestants, fundamentalists say Peter was never appointed by Christ as the earthly head of the Church for the simple reason that the Church has no earthly head and was never meant to have one. Christ is the Church's only foundation, in every sense of that term.

The papacy, they say, is an institution that arose out of third-century politics, both secular and ecclesiastical; it has no connection, other than mythological, with the New Testament. It was not established by Christ, even though supposed "successors" to Peter and their apologists claim it was. At best the papacy is a ruse; at worst, a work of the devil. In any case, it is an institution designed to give the Catholic Church an authority it simply does not have.

Besides, the argument continues, Peter was never in Rome and so could not have been the first Pope, and that puts the lie to talk about his "successors"; the unbroken chain is broken in its first link. How can Catholics talk about the divine origin of the papacy when their claim about Peter's whereabouts is wrong? Let us begin with this last charge.

At first glance, it might seem the question, whether Peter went to Rome and died there, is inconsequential. In a way it is. After all, his being in Rome would not itself prove the existence of the papacy; it would be a false inference to say he must have been the first Pope since he was in Rome and later Popes ruled from Rome. With that logic, Paul would have an equal claim to the title of first Pope, since he was an apostle and went to Rome. On the other hand, even if Peter never made it to the capital, he still could have been the first Pope, since one of his successors could have been the first holder of that office to settle there.

Besides, if Peter did end his days at Rome, that might have something to say about who his legitimate successors would be (and it does, since the man elected Bishop of Rome is automatically the new Pope on the notion that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and the Pope is merely Peter's successor),

but it would say nothing about the status of the papal office. It would not establish that the papacy was instituted by Christ in the first place.

No, somehow the question, while interesting historically, does not seem to be crucial to the real issue, whether the papacy was founded by Christ and, if so, what authority the Pope wields. Still, most anti-Catholic organizations take up the matter and even go to considerable trouble to prove Peter could not have been in Rome. Why? Because they think they can get mileage out of it.

Here is a point on which we can put the lie to Catholic claims, they think. Catholics trace the papacy to Peter, and they say he was martyred in Rome after heading the Church there. If we could show he never went to Rome, that would undermine—psychologically if not logically—their assertion that Peter was the first Pope. If people conclude the Catholic Church is wrong on this historical point, they will conclude it is wrong on the larger one, the supposed existence of the papacy. Such is the reasoning, the real reasoning, of leading anti-Catholics.

The case is stated most succinctly, even if not so bluntly, by Loraine Boettner in *Roman Catholicism*:

The remarkable thing, however, about Peter's alleged bishopric in Rome is that the New Testament has not one word to say about it. The word Rome occurs only nine times in the Bible [actually, ten times in the Old Testament and ten times in the New], and never is Peter mentioned in connection with it. There is no allusion to Rome in either of his epistles. Paul's journey to the city is recorded in great detail (Acts 27 and 28). There is in fact no New Testament evidence, nor any historical proof of any kind, that Peter ever was in Rome. All rests on legend.¹

Well, what about it? Admittedly the scriptural evidence for Peter being in Rome is weak. Nowhere does the Bible unequivocally say he was there; neither does it say he was not. Just as the New Testament never says, "Peter then went to Rome", it never says, "Peter did not go to Rome". In fact, very little is said about where he, or any of the apostles other than Paul, *did* go in the years after the Ascension. For the most part, we have to rely on books other than the New Testament for information about what happened to the Twelve, Peter included, in later years.

But Boettner is wrong when he claims "there is no allusion to Rome in either of [Peter's] epistles". There is, in the greeting at the end of the first epistle: "The Church here in Babylon, united with you by God's election, sends you her greeting, and so does my son, Mark" (1 Pet 5:13). Babylon is a code word for Rome. It is used that way six times in the last book of the

Bible and in extra-biblical works such as *Sibylline Oracles* (5, 159f.), the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (ii, I), and *4 Esdras* (3:1). Eusebius Pamphilus, writing about 303, noted that “it is said that Peter’s first epistle, in which he makes mention of Mark, was composed at Rome itself; and that he himself indicates this, referring to the city figuratively as Babylon.”²

Consider the other New Testament citations: “A second angel followed, who cried out, Babylon, great Babylon is fallen; she who made all the nations drunk with the maddening wine of her fornication” (Rev 14:8); “The great city broke in three pieces, while the cities of the heathens came down in ruins. And God did not forget to minister a draught of his wine, his avenging anger, to Babylon, the great city” (Rev 16:19); “There was a title written over his forehead, The mystic Babylon, great mother-city of all harlots, and all that is abominable on earth” (Rev 17:5); “And he cried aloud, Babylon, great Babylon is fallen” (Rev 18:2); “Standing at a distance, for fear of sharing her punishment, they will cry out, Alas, Babylon the great, alas, Babylon the strong, in one brief hour judgment has come upon you” (Rev 18:10); “So, with one crash of ruin, will Babylon fall, the great city” (Rev 18:21).

These references cannot be to the onetime capital of the Babylonian Empire. That Babylon had been reduced to an inconsequential status by the march of years, military defeat, and political subjugation; it was no longer a “great city”. It played no important part in the recent history of the ancient world. The only truly “great city” in New Testament times was Rome.

“But there is no good reason for saying that ‘Babylon’ means ‘Rome’ ”,³ insists Boettner. But there is, and the good reason is persecution. Peter was known to the authorities as a leader of the Church, and the Church, under Roman law, was organized atheism. (The worship of any gods other than the Roman was considered atheism.) Peter would do himself, not to mention those with him, no service by advertising his presence in the capital—after all, mail service from Rome was then even worse than it is today, and letters could be intercepted easily by Roman officials. Peter was a wanted man, as were all Christian leaders. Why encourage a manhunt? In any event, let us be generous and admit that it is easy for an opponent of Catholicism to think, in good faith, that Peter was never in Rome, at least if he bases his conclusion on the Bible alone. But restricting his inquiry to the Bible is something he should not do; external evidence has to be considered, too.

William A. Jurgens, in his three-volume set *The Faith of the Early Fathers*,⁴ an easily accessible and masterly compendium that cites at length a

great number of works from the *Didache* to John Damascene, includes thirty references to this question, divided, in the index, about evenly between the statements that “Peter came to Rome and died there” and that “Peter established his See at Rome and made the Bishop of Rome his successor in the primacy.” A few examples must suffice, but they and other early references demonstrate there can be no question that the universal—and very early—position (one hesitates to use the word “tradition”, since some people read it as “legend”) was that Peter resided and was martyred in the capital of the Empire.

Dionysius of Corinth, writing to Soter, the twelfth Pope, about 170, said, “You have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome.”⁵ It was commonly accepted, from the very first, that both Peter and Paul were martyred at Rome, probably in the Neronian persecution.

A generation later Tertullian noted, “How happy is that Church . . . where Peter endured a passion like that of the Lord, where Paul was crowned in a death like John’s” ⁶ (referring to John the Baptist, as both he and Paul were beheaded). Fundamentalists admit Paul died in Rome, so the implication from Tertullian is that Peter also must have been there. In the same work Tertullian said, “This is the way in which the apostolic Churches transmit their lists: like the Church of the Smyrnaeans, which records that Polycarp was placed there by John; like the Church of the Romans, where Clement was ordained by Peter”.⁷ This Clement, known as Clement of Rome, later would be the fourth Pope. (Note that Tertullian did not say Peter consecrated Clement as Pope, which would have been impossible since a Pope does not name his own successor; he merely ordained Clement as priest.) Clement wrote his Letter to the Corinthians perhaps before 70,⁸ just a few years after Peter and Paul were killed; in it he made reference to Peter ending his life where Paul ended his.

In writing to them around 110, Ignatius of Antioch remarked he could not command the Roman Christians the way Peter and Paul once did,⁹ such a comment making sense only if Peter had been a leader, if not the leader, of the Church in Rome.

Near the end of the second century, Irenaeus mentioned that Matthew wrote his Gospel “while Peter and Paul were evangelizing in Rome and laying the foundation of the Church”. He said the two departed Rome, perhaps to attend the Council of Jerusalem, and he noted that Linus was

named as Peter's successor—that is, the second Pope—and that next in line were Anacletus (also known as Cletus) and then Clement of Rome.¹⁰

Clement of Alexandria wrote at the turn of the third century. A fragment of one of his works is preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*, the first history of the Church. Clement wrote, "When Peter preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had been for a long time his follower and who remembered his sayings, should write down what had been proclaimed."¹¹

Peter of Alexandria was bishop of that city and died around 311. A few years before his death he wrote a treatise on penance. In it he said, "Peter, the first chosen of the apostles, having been apprehended often and thrown into prison and treated with ignominy, at last was crucified in Rome."¹² Seven years later, Lactantius noted that "when Nero was already reigning Peter came to Rome, where, in virtue of the performance of certain miracles which he worked by that power of God which had been given to him, he converted many to righteousness and established a firm and steadfast temple to God."¹³ Nero reigned from 54 to 68.

Eusebius Pamphilius gave more precise dates than did Lactantius. He said that in 42 (he actually said the "second year of the two hundredth and fifth olympiad") "the apostle Peter, after he has established the Church in Antioch, is sent to Rome, where he remains as bishop of that city, preaching the Gospel for twenty-five years." He went on to say that "Nero is the first, in addition to all his other crimes, to make a persecution against the Christians, in which Peter and Paul died gloriously at Rome."¹⁴

These citations could be multiplied. It should be enough to note that no ancient writer claimed Peter ended his life elsewhere than in Rome. True, many refer to the fact that he was at one point in Antioch, but most go on to say he went on from there to the capital. Remember, these are the works that form the basis of Christian historical writing in the immediate post-New Testament centuries. On the question of Peter's whereabouts they are in agreement, and their cumulative testimony should carry considerable weight.

To sum up, Boettner does not know what he is talking about when he claims there is no "historical proof of any kind" and that "all rests on legend". The truth is that *all* the historical evidence is on the side of the Catholic position.

Continuing, Boettner, like other fundamentalist apologists, claims that

“exhaustive research by archaeologists has been made down through the centuries to find some inscription in the Catacombs and other ruins of ancient places in Rome that would indicate Peter at least visited Rome. But the only things found which gave any promise at all were some bones of uncertain origin.”¹⁵ Boettner saw *Roman Catholicism* through the presses in 1962. His original book and the revisions to it since have failed to mention the results of the excavations under the high altar of St. Peter’s Basilica, excavations that had been under way for decades but that were undertaken in earnest after World War II.

Pope Paul VI was able to announce officially something that had been discussed in archaeological literature and religious publications for years, that the actual tomb of the first Pope had been identified conclusively, that his remains were apparently present, and that in the vicinity of his tomb were inscriptions identifying the place as Peter’s burial site, meaning early Christians knew that the Prince of the Apostles was there. The story of how all this was determined, with scientific accuracy, is too long to recount here. It is discussed in detail in John Evangelist Walsh’s *The Bones of St. Peter*.¹⁶

It is enough to say that the combination of historical and scientific evidence is such that no one willing to look at the facts with an open mind can doubt that Peter was in Rome. To deny that fact is to let prejudice override reason. Grant, then, that Peter really was in Rome and really died and was buried there. What can be said about him, particularly from Scripture? Fundamentalists say he was just the equal of the other apostles, not their leader. He enjoyed no primacy, and he was granted by Christ no powers not given to the others.

In fact, there is ample evidence in the New Testament that Peter was first in authority among the apostles. When they were named, Peter almost always headed the list (Mt 10:1-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Acts 1:13); sometimes it was only “Peter and his companions” (Lk 9:32). Peter was the one who generally spoke for the apostles (Mt 18:21; Mk 8:29; Lk 12:41; Jn 6:69), and he figured in many of the most dramatic scenes (Mt 14:28-32; 17:24; Mk 10:28). On Pentecost it was he who first preached to the crowds (Acts 2:14-40), and he worked the first healing (Acts 3:6-7). And to Peter came the revelation that Gentiles were to be baptized (Acts 10:46-48).

Peter’s preeminent position among the apostles was symbolized at the very beginning of his relationship with Christ, although the implications were only slowly unfolded. At their first meeting, Christ told Simon that his name

would thereafter be Peter, which translates as Rock (Jn 1:42). The startling thing was that in the Old Testament only God was called a rock. The word was never used as a proper name for a man. If one were to turn to a companion and say, "From now on your name is Asparagus", people would wonder. Why Asparagus? What is the meaning of it? What does it signify? Indeed, why Peter for Simon the fisherman? Why give him as a name a word only used for God before this moment?

Christ was not given to meaningless gestures, and neither were the Jews as a whole when it came to names. Giving a new name meant that the status of the person was changed, as when Abram was changed to Abraham (Gen 17:5); Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28); Eliacim to Joakim (2 Kings 23:34); and Daniel, Ananias, Misael, and Azarias to Baltassar, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago (Dan 1:6-8). But no Jew had ever been called Rock because that was reserved for God. The Jews would give other names taken from nature, such as Barach (which means lightning; Jos 19:45), Deborah (bee; Gen 35:8), and Rachel (ewe; Gen 29:16), but not Rock. In the New Testament James and John were surnamed Boanerges, Sons of Thunder, by Christ (Mk 3:17), but that was never regularly used in place of their original names. Simon's new name supplanted the old.

Not only was there significance in Simon being given a name that had been used only to describe God, but the place where the renaming occurred was also important. "Then Jesus came into the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi" (Mt 16:13), a city that Philip the Tetrarch built and named in honor of Caesar Augustus, who had died in A.D. 14. The city lay near cascades in the Jordan River and not far from a gigantic wall of rock two hundred feet high and five hundred feet long, part of the southern foothills of Mount Hermon.¹⁷

Caesarea Philippi is no more. Near its ruins is the small Arab town of Banias, and at the base of the rock wall may be found what is left of one of the springs that fed the Jordan. It was here that Jesus pointed to Simon and said, "Thou art Peter" (Mt 16:18). The significance of the event must have been clear to the other apostles. As devout Jews they knew at once that the location was meant to emphasize the importance of what was being done.

None complained of Simon being singled out for this honor, and in the rest of the New Testament he is called by his new name, while James and John remain just James and John, not Boanerges.

When he first saw Simon, "Jesus looked at him closely and said, 'Thou art Simon the son of Jonah; thou shalt be called Cephas' (which means the same

as Peter)” (Jn 1:42). The word Cephas is merely the transliteration of the Aramaic *Kepha* into Greek. *Kepha* means rock. Later, after Peter and the other disciples had been with Christ for some time, they went to Caesarea Philippi, where Peter made his profession of faith: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:17). Jesus told Peter that this truth was revealed to him specially, and then he reiterated: “Thou art Peter” (Mt 16:18). To this was added the promise that the Church that would be founded would, in some way, be founded on Peter (Mt 16:18).

Then two important things were told the apostle. “Whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19). Here Peter was singled out for the authority that provides for the forgiveness of sins and the making of disciplinary rules. Later the apostles as a whole would be given similar power, but here Peter received it in a special sense; the later grant to them did not diminish the uniqueness of what was granted Peter. Indeed, Peter alone was promised something else. “I will give to thee [singular] the keys to the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 16:19). In ancient times keys were the hallmark of authority. A walled city might have one great gate and that gate one great lock worked by one great key. To be given the key to the city (an honor that exists even today, although its import is largely lost) meant to be given free access to and authority over the city. The city to which Peter was given the keys was the heavenly city itself. This symbolism for authority is used elsewhere in the Bible (Is 22:22; Rev 1:18).

Finally, after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and asked Peter three times, “Dost thou love me?” (Jn 21:15-17). In expiation of his threefold denial, Peter gave a threefold affirmation of love. Then Christ, who is the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11, 14), gave Peter all the authority he earlier promised: “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17). Thus was completed the prediction made just before Jesus and his followers went for the last time to Olivet.

Immediately before his denials were predicted, Peter was told, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has claimed power over you all, so that he can sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for thee [singular], that thy faith may not fail; when, after a while, thou hast come back to me [after the denials], it is for thee to be the support of thy brethren” (Lk 22:31-32). Christ prayed that Peter would have faith that would never fail, that he would be a guide for the others, and Christ’s prayer, being perfectly efficacious, was sure to be fulfilled. Here we see the roots of papal infallibility and the primacy that is

the Bishop of Rome's.

Now take a closer look at the key verse: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Mt 16:18). Disputes about this line have always concerned the meaning of the term rock. To whom, or to what, does it refer? Since Simon's fresh name of Peter itself means rock, the sentence could be rewritten as: "Thou art Rock and upon this rock I will build my Church." The play on words seems obvious, but commentators wishing to avoid what follows from this—the establishment of the papacy—have suggested that the word rock could not refer to Peter but must refer to his profession of faith or to Christ.

According to the rules of grammar, the phrase "this rock" must relate to the closest noun. Peter's profession of faith ("Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God") is two verses earlier, while his name, a proper noun, is in the immediately preceding clause. As an analogy, consider this artificial sentence: "I have a car and a truck, and it is blue." Which is blue? The truck, because that is the noun closest to the pronoun "it". This identification would be even clearer if the reference to the car were two sentences earlier, as the reference to Peter's profession is two sentences earlier than the term rock.

The same kind of objection applies to the argument that the rock is Christ himself, since he is mentioned within the profession of faith. The fact that he is elsewhere, by a different metaphor, called the cornerstone (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4-8) does not disprove that here Peter is the foundation. Christ is naturally the principal and, since he will be returning to heaven, the invisible foundation of the Church that will be established, but Peter is named by him as the secondary and, because he and his successors will remain on earth, the visible foundation. Peter can be a foundation only because first Christ is one.

There is another analogy. At times we ask our friends to pray for us, and we pray for them. Our prayers ask God for special help for one another. When we pray in this way, what are we doing? We are acting as mediators, as go-betweens. We are approaching God on someone else's behalf. Does this contradict Paul's statement that Christ is the one mediator (1 Tim 2:5)? No, because our mediatorship is entirely secondary to and dependent on his. He could have established his mediatorship in any way he chose, and he chose to have us participate when he commanded us to pray for one another (Mt 5:44; 1 Tim 2:1-4; Rom 15:30; Acts 12:5), even for the dead (2 Tim 1:16-18). So, just as there can be secondary mediators and a primary one, there can be a secondary foundation and a primary one.

Opponents of the Catholic interpretation of Matthew 16:18 also note that in the Greek text the name of the apostle is *Petros*, a masculine noun, while rock is rendered as *petra*, which is feminine. The first means a small stone, the second a massive rock. If Peter was meant to be the massive rock, the steady foundation of the Church here below, why is his name not *Petra*? As Loraine Boettner puts it in *Roman Catholicism*, “The Greek *petros* is commonly used of a small, movable stone, a mere pebble, as it were. But *petra* means an immovable foundation, in this instance, the basic truth that Peter had just confessed, the deity of Christ.”¹⁸ The Bible is clear on this point: Peter was no sure foundation.

Boettner continues by saying, “Had Christ intended to say that the Church would be founded on Peter, it would have been ridiculous for Him to have shifted to the feminine form of the word in the middle of the statement, saying, if we may translate literally and somewhat whimsically, ‘And I say unto thee, that thou art Mr. Rock, and upon this, the Miss Rock, I will build my church.’ . . . He made two complete, distinct statements. He said, ‘Thou art Peter,’ and, ‘Upon this rock (change of gender, indicating change of subject) I will build my church.’ ”¹⁹ Boettner’s “whimsy” obscures the straightforward solution to this problem.

The first thing to note is that Christ did not speak to the disciples in Greek. (And not Hebrew, either, which was reserved as a sacred language and was not in common use, somewhat analogously to the way Latin, in the recent past, was the sacred language for Catholics, but was not used by them in everyday speech.) Christ spoke Aramaic, the common language of Palestine at the time. In that language the word for rock is *kepha*. What was said was thus: “Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my Church.” When Matthew’s Gospel was translated from the original Aramaic to Greek,²⁰ there arose a problem that did not confront the evangelist when he first composed his account of Christ’s life in his native tongue.

In Aramaic the word *kepha* has the same ending whether it refers to a rock or is used as a man’s name. In Greek, though, the word for rock, *petra*, is feminine in gender. The translator could use it for the second appearance of *kepha* in the sentence, but not for the first, because it would be inappropriate to give a man a feminine name. So he put a masculine ending on it, and there was *Petros*, which happened to be a preexisting word meaning a small stone. Some of the effect of the play on words was lost, but that was the best that could be done in Greek. In English, as in Aramaic, there is no problem with

endings, so an English rendering could read: “Thou art Rock, and upon this rock I will build my church.” In modern French Bibles, the word *pierre* appears in both places. The real meaning is hard to miss.

Another point: If the rock really did refer to Christ, as fundamentalists claim (basing their argument on 1 Corinthians 10:4, “and the rock was Christ”), why did Matthew leave the passage as it was? In the original Aramaic, and in the English that is a closer parallel to it than is the Greek, the passage seems clear enough. Matthew must have realized that his readers would conclude the obvious from “Rock . . . rock”. If he meant Christ to be understood as the rock, why did he not say so? Why did he construct his sentences so awkwardly that contortions would be required to elicit the fundamentalist interpretation? Why did he take a chance and leave it up to Paul to write a clarifying text (presuming, of course, that 1 Corinthians was written after Matthew, as most biblical scholars assert; if it came first, it could not have been written to clarify it)?

The reason, of course, is that Matthew knew full well that what the sentence seemed to say was just what it really was saying. It was Simon—weak, Christ-denying Simon—who was chosen to be the first link in the chain of the papacy. The scandal, to fundamentalists, is that Christ would choose as his Vicar the weakest of the apostles, not the strongest. But God seems to enjoy working through the lowly in order to confound the mighty, and his choice of Peter was quite in keeping with other selections he had made, such as deciding to be born in a stable rather than a palace. In a way, it was Peter’s weakness that would manifest the strength of the papacy. After all, noted G. K. Chesterton when writing of the succession of popes, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.²¹

Still, however apt Chesterton’s comment might be, a fundamentalist will not see it as supporting the Catholic position since it presumes the divine establishment of the papacy. His mind will turn, instead, to snatches of ecclesiastical history he has imbibed from visiting preachers or from anti-Catholic literature. What will stick in his mind is the claim that the papacy has achieved its position of authority through purely human machinations. Providence, he has been told, had nothing to do with it.

This is the theme of Henry T. Hudson’s *Papal Power*,²² published in an attractive paperback format in England, but printed and distributed in America. This may be the most exhaustive look at the papacy to come from the hands of a fundamentalist in recent years. In five chapters Hudson

examines the “origins of papal power”, the development of the papacy before the Reformation, Luther’s attack on the papacy, the further development of the institution after the Reformation, and papal claims in light of Scripture. (The chapter on Luther really does not focus on the Reformer’s analysis of the papacy; it is better described as plain hagiography.)

In the introduction Hudson comments on the 1979 visit of John Paul II to the United States and asks, “Whatever happened to the traditional anti-papal sentiments common in American history?”²³ In a footnote he points out that Loraine Boettner has said that two-thirds of the American population in 1776 was Reformed Protestant. Hudson longs for the good old days.

His appreciations of ecclesiastical history and biblical criticism are not without weaknesses. He believes, for instance, that the papacy was supremely strong during the Middle Ages, when in fact the Popes were at the mercy of princes and were largely ignored by irreformable bishops and persnickety abbots. He thinks Rome was without influence in the earliest ecumenical councils, when in fact the popes sent legates and formally approved the councils’ decisions. With respect to Peter’s presence in Rome, Hudson thinks Paul’s statement that “only Luke is with me” (2 Tim 4:11) settles the matter. “This is conclusive.”²⁴ If it is, it is *too* conclusive. If the line proves Peter was not in Rome, it also proves no Christians, other than Luke and Paul, were there. Yet Paul wrote an epistle to the Christians in Rome, who apparently were numerous. Were they all out of town when 2 Timothy was written? If so, why was Luke still around?

When the interpretation of Matthew 16:18 is the question, Hudson is satisfied to say, “A simple, straightforward consideration of the grammatical construction seems to rule out Peter as the *petra*.”²⁵ If he is to be satisfied with simple, straightforward grammatical constructions, why no mention of the Aramaic, which is even simpler than the Greek and which states: “Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my Church”? This seems to say the rock is Peter, but Hudson makes no allusion to the Catholic arguments.

His book’s key contention, what distinguishes it from other anti-Catholic works (not because other anti-Catholics would disagree, but because few of them bother to discuss the matter), is that the papacy obtained its exalted position through fraud. Hudson discusses at length forgeries on which the Popes supposedly built their power. It is quite true there were forgeries, and they were used, long after the events they purport to describe, to bolster Rome’s position, but commentators of almost all stripes, save the

fundamentalist, agree the forgeries had little or no practical effect. The papacy already was established firmly when the forgeries first appeared, and documents such as the Donation of Constantine and the False Decretals added little to the status of the institution. Granted, it was imprudent for any Church official to base an argument on them, and Lorenzo Valla's *Discourse on the Forgery of the Alleged Donation of Constantine*, which appeared in 1440, made many scholars look incompetent, but the fact remains that the papacy would have been what it was with or without the forgeries. They had far less effect on the institution than Parson Weems' biography had on the American public's perception of George Washington.

The curious thing is that, although Hudson decries forgeries used by partisans of Rome, he says nothing against forgeries used by Hudson. The last seventeen pages of the book are nothing less than the complete transcript of the speech said to have been given by Bishop Josip Strossmayer at Vatican I in 1870. Hudson does not defend the speech against the charges that it is a forgery; he does not even imply that he knows of such charges. He accepts the speech's bona fides unquestioningly.

In doing so he demonstrates that while fundamentalists can produce tracts, newsletters, and even books in quantity, they rarely make any effort to test their claims against the Catholic version of the facts. They do not seem to know there *is* a Catholic version. How simple it would be to open the *Catholic Encyclopedia* and see, in the article on Strossmayer, that the speech attributed to him is a forgery. No one is obligated to accept the article writer's word for it, but sources are given, and with a little legwork the sources can be checked. But checking is not something professional anti-Catholics are inclined to do. They are not so much interested in accuracy as in effect.

Chapter 18

Infallibility of the Pope

Pretend for a moment a Pope is infallible not only in matters of faith or morals, but in trigonometry. He is presented with an examination consisting of one hundred trigonometry problems. What is the *least* number of problems he will answer correctly?

Someone who says “one hundred” may understand trigonometry, but his understanding of infallibility is no better than the average non-Catholic’s. The correct answer is: zero. Although infallible in trigonometry, the Pope might get none of the problems right. Being infallible in trigonometry would mean being prevented from putting down the wrong answers. It would not mean being able to put down the right ones. The answer sheet could be left entirely blank—and would be, if the Pope had not done his homework.

It is the same in real life. Through the guardianship of the Holy Spirit, the Pope is guaranteed not to teach error regarding faith or morals (presuming, of course, he intends to make an *ex cathedra* statement and is not speaking as a private scholar). But he cannot teach what is true unless he first knows what is true, and he learns that the same way we do.

Catholics who fail this quiz may appreciate why nearly all fundamentalists misunderstand infallibility. They do not know what infallibility means. Most of them hear “infallibility” and think “impeccability”. They think Catholics believe the Pope cannot sin. Those who do not make that elementary blunder imagine the Pope operates like Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, who claimed to have at one time the Old Testament’s Urim and Thummim. Smith repaired to his oracle to translate the Book of Mormon from the golden plates, or so he said, and most non-Catholics think the Pope relies on some sort of amulet or magical incantation when an infallible definition is due. Given this, it might be too much to expect the average fundamentalist to understand the niceties of infallibility. The first thing he would have to perceive (after being told the subject concerns the absence of error, not of sin) is that infallibility belongs to the body of bishops as a whole, when, in moral

unity, they teach a doctrine as true. “He who listens to you, listens to me” (Lk 10:16); “all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Mt 18:18). Vatican II put it this way:

Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter’s successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively. This authority is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith.

Infallibility belongs in a special way to the Pope as the head of the bishops (Mt 16:17-19; Jn 21:15-17) and is something he

enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith (cf. Luke 22:32), he proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of faith or morals. Therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly held irreformable, for they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, an assistance promised to him in blessed Peter.¹

The infallibility of the Pope is certainly a doctrine that has developed, but it is not one that sprang out of nowhere in 1870. It is implicit in these Petrine texts: John 21:15-17 (“Feed my sheep. . .”); Luke 22:32 (“I have prayed for thee that thy faith may not fail”); Matthew 16:18 (“Thou art Peter. . .”). Christ instructed the Church to preach the good news (Mt 28; 19-20) and promised the protection of the Holy Spirit “to guide you into all truth” (Jn 16:13). That mandate and that promise guarantee that the Church will never fall away from his teachings (1 Tim 3:15), even if individual Catholics might. The inability of the Church to teach error is infallibility, and it is a negative protection. It means what is officially taught will not be wrong, not that the official teachers will have the wits about them to stand up and teach what is right when it needs to be taught.

As Christians got clearer and clearer notions of the teaching authority of the whole Church and of the primacy of the Pope, they got clearer notions of the Pope’s own infallibility. This happened early on. In 433 Pope Sixtus III declared that to assent to the Bishop of Rome’s decision is to assent to Peter, who lives in his successors and whose faith does not fail.² Cyprian of Carthage, writing about 256, asked: “Would heretics dare to come to the very seat of Peter whence apostolic faith is derived and whither no errors can

come?”³ Augustine of Hippo summed up the ancient attitude when he remarked, “Rome has spoken; the case is closed.”⁴

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, the famed radio priests of two generations ago, put it this way:

Before the definition of infallibility in 1870, the Popes did not know they were infallible with the same full certainty of faith as that possessed by later Popes. But they were infallible in fact. The gift of papal infallibility was essential to the Church, not the definition of the gift. You wonder why it was defined only in 1870. But definitions are not given unnecessarily. If no discussion arises on a given point, and no one disputes it, there is no need for a definition. But in the seventeenth century the question of the Pope’s doctrinal authority came more and more to the front, until in 1870, the Vatican Council was asked to settle the question once and for all. The time had come for the Church to know herself fully on this point.⁵

An infallible papal pronouncement is made only when some doctrine is called into question. Most have never been doubted by the vast majority of Catholics, although, at any one time, one could find someone to discount nearly any belief. Pick up a catechism and look at the great number of doctrines, most of which have never been formally defined by an *ex cathedra* papal statement. There are, in fact, few topics on which it would be possible for the Pope to make an infallible decision without seconding infallible pronouncements from some other source, such as an ecumenical council or the unanimous teaching of the Fathers.⁶

At least the outline, if not the text references, of the preceding paragraphs should be familiar to literate Catholics, to whom this subject should seem reasonably straightforward. It is a different story for fundamentalists. For them papal infallibility seems a muddle because their idea of what it covers is muddled.

Joseph Zacchello, ordained a priest in Italy and sent to the United States to serve Italian-Americans, converted to “Bible Christianity” in 1944. Four years later he published *Secrets of Romanism*. Because of the resurgence of anti-Catholic sentiment, the book has been reprinted recently. Zacchello argues against papal infallibility on the ground that it “is powerless to prevent divisions. Popes have anathematized other Popes, Councils have contradicted Councils, and doctors of theology have violently opposed other doctors.” Besides, he notes, “the Roman Church often had two Popes; and once there were three rival Popes at one time (the Great Western Schism 1378—1417).”⁷

This is confusing—and inaccurate. No Catholic ever claimed papal

infallibility would “prevent divisions”. Yes, some Popes have contradicted other Popes, in their private opinions or with respect to disciplinary rulings, but never has any Pope officially contradicted what an earlier Pope officially taught about faith or morals. The same may be said about ecumenical councils, which also teach infallibly. No ecumenical council has ever contradicted the teaching of an earlier ecumenical council on faith or morals. Have “doctors of theology . . . violently opposed other doctors”? Of course, but Catholics do not hold that theologians are infallible, so disagreement between them is immaterial, and certainly the fact that they may disagree with one another says nothing about the existence of papal infallibility.

Consider Zacchello’s misleading comment about the Great Western Schism, What happened was this. In 1378 Urban VI was lawfully elected Pope. Some cardinals thought he was not properly elected, so they elected another man, Clement VII. There were good men on both sides, supporters of each claimant honestly thinking they were backing the real Pope. No one imagined there could be two Popes at once. To settle the dispute, another group of cardinals exceeded their rights and declared both Urban and Clement deposed. They elected still a third claimant, Alexander V. All this time, Urban was the authentic Pope. Eventually he died, as did his rivals. Urban’s third successor was Gregory XII. In order to end the confusion, which by this time had lasted nearly forty years, a council was convened, and Gregory resigned. The successors to Clement and Alexander were declared to have been improperly elected, and a new Pope, Martin V, was elected. In all these years there was never any question about there being more than one Pope; there was only a mistake among the faithful regarding who was the legitimate successor to the Prince of the Apostles.

It is at least as bad with Ralph Woodrow, author of *Babylon Mystery Religion*. He says, “People naturally question how infallibility could be linked with the papal office when some of the popes had been very poor examples in morals and integrity.” But he at once recognizes that he is confusing infallibility with impeccability, so he covers himself by saying, “And if the infallibility be applied only to doctrines pronounced by the popes, how was it that some popes disagreed with other popes?”⁸ He wants to have it both ways; he gets more mileage out of his argument if the reader thinks infallibility and impeccability are identical, but he makes allowances for some readers knowing the difference.

After recounting the admittedly bizarre case of Pope Formosus, whose

corpse was disinterred and placed in the dock during a posthumous trial, Woodrow claims “such sharp disagreement between popes certainly argues against the ideal of papal infallibility”,⁹ This evinces a basic confusion, since the issue must always be phrased this way: Have two popes disagreed when officially teaching on faith or morals? The Formosus case had nothing to do with any such teaching or any such disagreement.

Formosus had been the bishop of Porto, and he was elected Pope at a time when it was considered improper for a bishop to transfer from one see to another. This was merely a disciplinary rule and did not invalidate his election. His second successor, Stephen VII, prompted by the emperor, Lambert, found it politically expedient to declare that Formosus had become Pope improperly and that his ordinations were consequently invalid. Thus the trial. Formosus was found “guilty”, and his ordinations were declared null. So, there certainly was a disagreement (if that is the proper word) between Formosus, by then dead, and Stephen, but the posthumous trial, no matter how repugnant, had nothing to do with a definition regarding faith or morals, so the question of papal infallibility simply does not apply.

Woodrow continues by pointing out that “Pope Sixtus V had a version of the Bible prepared which he declared to be authentic. Two years later Pope Clement VIII declared that it was full of errors and ordered another to be made!”¹⁰ And he says, “When we consider the hundreds of times and ways that popes have contradicted each other over the centuries, we can understand how the idea of papal infallibility is difficult for many people to accept. While it is true that most papal statements are not made within the narrow confines of the 1870 *ex cathedra* definition, yet if popes have erred in so many other ways, how can we believe they are guaranteed a divine infallibility for a few moments if and when they should indeed decide to speak *ex cathedra*?”¹¹

It is unsurprising that Woodrow ends his chapter on papal infallibility with an exercise in numerology, noting that “as early as 1612 it was pointed out, as Andreas Helwig did in his book *Roman Antichrist*, that the title ‘Vicar of Christ’ has a numerical value of 666.” When written as “Vicar of the Son of God”, *Vicarius Filii Dei*, the letters sum to 666, if the Roman values are used. “The number reminds us, of course, of Revelation 13:18, ‘Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.’ ”

There are several things wrong with this argument. *Vicarius Filii Dei* never

has been used as a title by any Pope. The Pope's full title is Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ [or, more simply, Vicar of Christ—*Vicarius Christi*], Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, and Sovereign of the City of the Vatican.

Latin, like most other ancient languages, used letters to represent numbers. The letters of *Vicarius Filii Dei* do indeed add up to 666. The letters of *Vicarius Christi* do not. Anti-Catholic pundits, unable to use *Vicarius Christi*—the Pope's real title—to their advantage, turn to a similar-sounding title and claim—voila!—that the Pope is the beast.¹²

In doing this, these opponents of Catholicism overlook an important fact. The last book of the Bible was written in Greek, not Latin. We should expect “the number of the beast” to be understood through Greek numerology, not Latin. The name or title that totals 666 should be based on Greek. But there is a way that Latin figures in, although it does not help the anti-Catholics' argument.

By the end of the second century there were in circulation manuscripts that gave “the number of the beast” as 616 instead of 666. Why this discrepancy? Apparently there was confusion on the part of one or more copyists, and that confusion gives credence to the most widely accepted theory about the identity of the beast, that the beast was Nero Caesar,

The Greek form of his name in Hebrew letters is *nrwn qsr*. Each letter stands for a number (n = 30, r = 200, w = 6, q = 100, s = 60), Adding up the letters (50 + 200 + 6 + 50 + 100 + 60 + 200) yields 666. The Latin form of his name, when given in Hebrew letters, is slightly different: *nrw qsr*. Its letters total 616, the alternative reading of the manuscripts. It may have been natural for copyists whose mother tongue was Latin, knowing the reference was to Nero, to presume 666 was an error and that 616 was the true number. They may have “corrected” what they perceived to be an error. So we see the earliest manuscripts giving 666 and some later manuscripts—copied when Latin had become the lingua franca of the Mediterranean—giving 616.

Not only does Nero's name work out arithmetically, and not only does identifying him as the beast account for the manuscript evidence, but he fits the context of Revelation. He was the first emperor to persecute Christians, and he would have been the perfect choice for the beast. So vigorous were his persecutions, in fact, that it was rumored Nero came to life again in one of his successors, Domitian, who was also a persecutor. Domitian was known as

Nero redivivus.

In any event, whatever the real identity of the beast, Ralph Woodrow gives no good reason for tying the number 666 to the papacy. The best he can do is to use a misrepresentation as a proof. Like other anti-Catholics, he so desperately wants the beast to be identified with the papacy that he does not bother to stick with the facts.

But Woodrow and his arguments are too easy to dismiss. The best attack by a fundamentalist is given, as usual, by Loraine Boettner in his *Roman Catholicism*. As mentioned in a previous chapter, he begins with a error large even by his standard. “Infallibility is not claimed for every statement made by the pope,” he says, “but only for those made when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, seated in his papal chair, the chair of St. Peter, and speaking in his official capacity as head of the church,”¹³ At this point an asterisk leads one to a footnote that states that the chair venerated as Peter’s comes from the ninth century and is of French origin. “It is not an antique of the first century”, the point being, apparently, that even if papal infallibility were theoretically possible, it is not possible in practice since today’s Popes are unable to sit in Peter’s actual chair.

Chair or no chair, Popes keep publishing their decisions, and Boettner has to deal with that fact. “It is interesting to notice that the popes, in issuing their decrees or pronouncements, do not label them *ex cathedra* or not *ex cathedra*. We may be sure that if this power were a reality they would not hesitate so to label them, that in fact they would find it very advantageous to do so. Surely it would be of inestimable value to know which deliverances are *ex cathedra* and which are not, which are infallible and authoritative and which are only private observations and therefore as fallible as those of anyone else.”¹⁴ Boettner’s appreciation of human nature is modest. To insert in all noninfallible pronouncements a note that “this is *not ex cathedra*” would be to invite everyone to commit Boettner’s error, which is to think the Pope’s noninfallible teachings are “therefore as fallible as those of anyone else”. Precisely because the Pope “does his homework”, and because of the way he prepares his statements, and because he is who he is, they are far less likely to be fallible—that is, wrong—than those given by others. The Pope speaks not off the top of his head, but from a tradition of right teaching.

The author of *Roman Catholicism* is unable to resist quoting a famous Catholic historian: “How true the words of England’s Lord Acton, himself a Roman Catholic, who after visiting Rome and seeing at firsthand the

workings of the papacy wrote: ‘All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ ”¹⁵ First of all, Boettner gives the standard misquotation. Acton actually said, “Power *tends* to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” He wrote this in a letter to Anglican Bishop Mandell Creighton on April 5, 1887, long after Vatican I. Second, Boettner fantasizes that Acton had the same kind of shock Martin Luther supposedly had when the monk first visited Rome, but Acton was long familiar with the place. Besides, his aphorism was in reference not just to Popes, but to kings and all men in positions of authority. To imply he was limiting his comment to the papacy, to suggest he was indicating rejection of papal infallibility, is to give a false impression of what he was saying.

Nevertheless, Boettner is far more accurate than Woodrow: “The doctrine of papal infallibility does not mean that the pope is infallible as a man. It does not relate to his personal habits. It does not mean that he is sinless. Nor does it mean that he is inspired as were the apostles so that he can write Scripture.” So far he is correct. But he immediately goes wrong, though not as egregiously as others: “It means rather that in his official capacity as teacher of the church he has the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that he can interpret and state clearly and positively doctrines which allegedly have been a part of the heritage of the church from the beginning.”¹⁶ Boettner does not quite grasp what infallibility covers. He does not understand that it is a negative protection and that a Pope too lazy to do his homework would not be able to make an infallible decision on anything. The charism of infallibility does not help a Pope know what is true, nor does it “inspire” him to teach what is true.

Boettner also errs, somewhat more subtly, in saying that “for centuries before the doctrine of papal infallibility was adopted there was much difference of opinion as to where that infallibility lay. . . . But in 1870 it was declared to reside in the pope alone, and all good Catholics are now compelled to accept that view.”¹⁷ Vatican I did not say infallibility resides in the Pope alone, for the very good reason that it resides also in the bishops teaching in union with the Pope.

As a biblical example of the fallibility of Popes, Boettner gives this: “That Peter, the alleged first pope, was not infallible as a teacher of faith and morals is evident from his conduct at Antioch when he refused to eat with Gentile Christians lest he offend certain Jews from Palestine (Gal. 2:11-16). Instead, he would have fastened the ritual requirements of Judaism on the new Christian church. This should have been no problem at all for him if he had

the special guidance of the Holy Spirit claimed by the Church of Rome for the pope.”¹⁸ Here Boettner imagines infallibility to be something like inspiration, and, like other fundamentalist writers, he never seems to apply to particular cases the standards of Vatican I. It may be because he, like his followers, confuses doctrine and morals with discipline and customs. Peter’s conduct at Antioch was not an attempt by him to teach formally on doctrine or morals.

Boettner caps his attack with a commentary on John Henry Newman. “It is well known that Cardinal Newman was strongly opposed to the promulgation of the doctrine of infallibility.” That much is true, but with the next sentence Boettner goes awry. “But having left the Church of England in order to join the Roman Church and having given it such fulsome praise, he was powerless to prevent the change and did not have the courage to come back out of it. . . . It was a bitter pill for Newman to swallow, but he submitted and acknowledged papal infallibility.”¹⁹ There are two things wrong with this analysis (or psychoanalysis). First, the implication that doctrine was being changed. It was not; it was just being made explicit. This point one can let slide. The libel of Newman is another thing altogether. Boettner apparently never read, or if he read he quickly forgot, the seventh part of Newman’s *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, the part titled “General Answer to Mr. Kingsley”. It is here that Newman examined infallibility. He wrote in 1864—six years before the definition given at Vatican I—about a problem that he wrestled with before his conversion in 1845.

Boettner will have us think Newman had no suspicion that papal infallibility might be a fact and, when it appeared that it would be proclaimed, he found that he had converted for the worse. Even if this were a true account of Newman’s thinking, which it is not, why did Newman not leave the Catholic Church if he thought papal infallibility nonexistent? After all, in 1845 he left the secure and socially acceptable established church for what in England was the inconsequential and outcast Roman Catholic Church. Reconverting would have been easy by comparison, particularly if he could refer to some papal usurpation. Why didn’t he? Because he not only accepted papal infallibility, he believed in it—and had since before he had become a Catholic. He opposed not the content of the definition given at Vatican I, but the wisdom of promulgating the definition at that time; he thought the promulgation was inopportune, not inaccurate.

Like other anti-Catholic writers, Boettner cites a number of “errors of the

popes”. With respect to what he identifies as doctrinal matters, he lists a dozen instances, most of which have nothing to do with the question at hand. For instance: “Zozimus (417—418) pronounced Pelagius an orthodox teacher, but later reversed his position at the insistence of Augustine.”²⁰ This demonstrates nothing more than that Augustine provided Zozimus with additional information on Pelagius, so the Pope had a more complete appreciation of the man’s doctrines. Besides, declaring a particular individual orthodox or unorthodox is simply not an attempted exercise of infallibility. Continuing, Boettner asks, “How is the decree of Clement XIV (July 21, 1773) suppressing the Jesuits to be harmonized with the contrary decree of Pius VII (August 7, 1814) restoring them?”²¹ Again, neither decree had anything to do with teaching faith or morals; each was purely a disciplinary matter.

Boettner’s argument is really reduced to three cases, those of Popes Liberius, Vigilius, and Honorius, the three cases to which all opponents of papal infallibility repair because they are the only cases that do not collapse as soon as they are mentioned. None of the instances can be shoehorned into the 1870 definition.

Boettner claims “Liberius, in 358, subscribed to a heretical Arian creed in order to gain the bishopric of Rome under the heretical emperor Constantius.”²² If Liberius did this—which, apparently, he did not—it would prove nothing, since his subscribing to a heresy *before* becoming Pope could have nothing to do with an exercise of papal infallibility. Infallibility is not retroactive. Election to the papacy does not validate a man’s earlier teachings.

Most commentators who bring up Liberius, it must be said, make a charge different from Boettner’s. They say Liberius subscribed to a heretical formula while he was Pope. In fact what he put his signature to was an ambiguous document that could be understood in either an orthodox or a heretical manner. When he did this he was not a free agent, since he had been forced into exile by the emperor. Even if the document had been strictly heretical, admitting of no orthodox interpretation, and even if Liberius signed it voluntarily, the issue of infallibility still would not have arisen since he signed only as a private theologian and was not signing something that purported to be a teaching that was to be held by all Christians. The requirements for an infallible papal teaching simply were not met.

Vigilius, Boettner says, “refused to condemn certain heretical teachers of the time of the Monophysite controversy and boycotted the fifth Ecumenical

Council which met at Constantinople in 553. When the Council proceeded without him and threatened to excommunicate and anathematize him, he submitted to its opinions, confessing that he had been a tool of Satan.”²³ This misses the sense of what really happened. Emperor Justinian published a decree condemning the writings of three men long dead. Their writings were known as the Three Chapters, and the heresy to which they subscribed was Nestorianism, which held that in Christ there are two persons joined together, God the Son and the man Jesus. (The orthodox doctrine is that there is only one Person in Christ, the divine, but two natures.) Justinian’s decree was designed to please the Monophysites. Monophysitism was a heresy that arose as a reaction to Nestorianism; it held that in Christ there is only one nature, the divine. The decree was signed by the Eastern patriarchs, but other bishops objected, saying the decree undermined the orthodox position by seeming to favor Monophysitism by default. At first Vigilius refused to condemn the Three Chapters, but in 548 he did, at the same time affirming the orthodox position. Later he retracted his condemnation. He continued to vacillate, and the ecumenical council was called. The council condemned the Three Chapters, and finally Vigilius gave in, joining in the condemnation. Throughout all this, he supported the orthodox position. The controversy concerned the expediency of condemning certain writings and of judging three men who had long since been judged by God. Vigilius intended to condemn only what was condemnable in the Three Chapters, not what was orthodox. The drawn-out incident is certainly confusing, but it gives no support to the anti-infallibility position since Vigilius never asserted that a heretical belief was to be believed as true.

Then comes the last of the three standard cases, According to an authority Boettner cites, “The greatest scandal of this nature is pope Honorius. He specifically taught the Monothelite heresy in two letters to the patriarch of Constantinople.”²⁴ (Monothelitism arose as a reaction to Monophysitism. It held that in Christ there is only one will, the divine. The orthodox position is that in him there are two wills, the divine and the human, but the two wills are in perfect harmony.)

Actually, Honorius elected to teach nothing at all. Ronald Knox, in a letter to Arnold Lunn reprinted in their book *Difficulties*, put the matter like this: “And Honorius, so far from pronouncing an infallible opinion in the Monothelite controversy, was ‘quite extraordinarily not’ (as Gore used to say) pronouncing a decision at all. To the best of his human wisdom, he

thought the controversy ought to be left unsettled, for the greater peace of the Church. In fact, he was an inopportunist. We, wise after the event, say that he was wrong. But nobody, I think, has ever claimed that the Pope is infallible in *not* defining a doctrine.”²⁵

Summing up, Knox asked Lunn, “Has it ever occurred to you how few are the alleged ‘failures of infallibility’? I mean, if somebody propounded in your presence the thesis that all the kings of England have been impeccable, you would not find yourself murmuring, ‘Oh, well, people said rather unpleasant things about Jane Shore . . . and the best historians seem to think that Charles II spent too much of his time with Nell Gwynn.’ Here have these Popes been, fulminating anathema after anathema for centuries—certain in all human probability to contradict themselves or one another over again. Instead of which you get this measly crop of two or three alleged failures!”²⁶ He acknowledged that this does not prove infallibility, but it does make the anti-infallibility argument look weak.

After examining alleged failures relating to definitions of faith, Boettner looks at “infallibility in the moral sphere” and immediately stumbles. He forgets what he quoted from Vatican I a few pages earlier and considers cases that speak not against infallibility, but against impeccability. He cites a few well-worn instances of papal immorality, naming Popes John XI, John XII, and Alexander VI, but he mentions not one incorrect papal ruling on a question of morals. If a Pope proclaims *ex cathedra* that lying is a sin and then immediately tells a lie, infallibility is not disproved, although that Pope’s impeccability certainly is. For infallibility to be disproved, Boettner would have to show an *ex cathedra* definition stating that lying is moral. He offers no such example, or anything parallel, because none exists.

Fundamentalists’ rejection of papal infallibility stems from their view of the Church. They do not think Christ established a visible Church, which means they do not believe in a hierarchy of bishops headed by the Pope. This is no place to give an elaborate demonstration of the establishment of a visible Church. It is enough to note that the New Testament shows the apostles setting up, after their Master’s instructions, a visible organization, and every Christian writer in the early centuries—in fact, nearly all Christians until the Reformation—took it for granted that Christ set up an ongoing organization.

If he did, he must have provided for its continuation; for its easy identification (that is, it had to be visible so it could be found); and, since he

would be gone from Earth, for some method by which it could preserve intact all his teachings. All this was effected through the apostolic succession of bishops, and the preservation of the Christian message, in its fullness, was guaranteed through the gift of infallibility—of the Church as a whole, but mainly as enjoyed by the temporal head of the Church, the Pope.

The Holy Spirit prevents a Pope from officially teaching error, and this charism follows, necessarily, from the existence of the Church itself. If the Church is to do what Christ said it would—and not do what he said it would not do, such as have the gates of hell prevail against it—then it must be able to teach infallibly. It must prove itself to be a perfectly steady guide in matters pertaining to salvation. There is no guarantee that any particular Pope will not let slip by chances to teach the truth, or that he will be sinless, or that mere disciplinary decisions will be intelligently made. It would be convenient if he were omniscient or impeccable, but his not being so will not subvert the Church. But he must be able to teach rightly, for that is the main function of the Church. For men to be saved, they must know what is to be believed. They must have a perfectly steady rock to build on when it comes to official teaching, and that is why papal infallibility exists.

Chapter 19

The Eucharist

Fundamentalist attacks on the Church always come around, as they must, to the Eucharist. Keith Green devoted the first of his *Catholic Chronicles* to what he acknowledged to be the core devotional doctrine of Catholics, and he was smart to do so. Bart Brewer, Donald F. Maconaghie, Jimmy Swaggart—they all zero in on the Eucharist, and in doing so they demonstrate that fundamentalists, contrary to popular belief, are not always literalists. This is shown in their interpretation of the key scriptural passage, the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper.

The narrative opens on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee with the feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle recorded by all four evangelists. After the people were fed, Jesus withdrew to the hillside to be alone. Night fell, and the disciples went down to the lake without him and, embarking in the only boat available, sailed for Capharnaum, which was on the western shore. Jesus caught up with them some time later by walking on the water. The multitude, thinking he still must be with them, stayed overnight where the miracle had been performed. The next morning they discovered Jesus was nowhere to be found and, when other boats put in near them, they embarked for Capharnaum, where they found Jesus and asked him when (but not how) he had made his way there, apparently thinking he had set off on foot before dawn for the long walk around the lake. He did not answer directly, but told them to “work to earn food which affords, continually, eternal life” (Jn 6:27). He had provided them their fill of natural bread; now he began to speak of supernatural bread.

With verse 30 begins a colloquy that took place in the synagogue at Capharnaum. The Jews asked him what sign he could perform, and, as a challenge, they noted that “our fathers had manna to eat in the desert” (Jn 6:31). Could Jesus top that? He told them the real bread from heaven comes from the Father. “Give us this bread”, they insisted. “But Jesus told them, It

is I who am the bread of life” (Jn 6:34-35). He was getting more explicit, and the Jews started to complain, but still understood him to be speaking metaphorically. Jesus repeated what he said before, then summarized: “I myself am the bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever. And now, what is this bread that I am to give? It is my flesh, given for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51-52). Then the Jews asked, incredulously, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (Jn 6:53).

Hugh Pope, in commenting on this chapter, remarked that at last “they had understood Him literally and were stupefied; but because they had understood Him correctly, He repeats His words with extraordinary emphasis, so much so that only now does He introduce the statement about drinking His blood”:¹ “You can have no life in yourselves, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood. The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood enjoys eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, lives continually in me, and I in him” (Jn 6:54-57).

There was no attempt to soften what was said, no attempt to correct “misunderstandings”, for there were none. His listeners understood him quite well. No one any longer thought he was speaking metaphorically, if they had, why no correction? On other occasions, whenever there was confusion, Christ explained what he meant. Here, where any misunderstanding would be catastrophic, there was no effort to correct. Instead, he repeated what he had said.

“There were many of his disciples who said, when they heard it, This is strange talk, who can be expected to listen to it?” (Jn 6:61). These were his *disciples*, people who already were used to his remarkable ways. He warned them not to think carnally, but spiritually: “Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life” (Jn 6:64). But he knew some did not believe, including the one who was to betray him. (It is here, in the rejection of the Eucharist, that Judas fell away.) “After this, many of his disciples went back to their own ways, and walked no more in his company” (Jn 6:67).

This is the only record we have of any of Christ’s followers forsaking him for doctrinal reasons. If they merely had misunderstood him, if they foolishly had taken a metaphor in a literal sense, why did he not call them back and straighten things out? Both the Jews, who were suspicious of him, and his disciples, who had accepted everything up to this point, would have remained

had he told them he meant no more than a symbol.

But he did not correct these first protesters, these proto-Protestants. Twelve times he said he was the bread that came down from heaven; four times he said they would have “to eat my flesh and drink my blood”. John 6 was an extended promise of what would be instituted at the Last Supper—and it was a promise that could not be more explicit. Or so it would seem to a Catholic. But what do fundamentalists say?

Anti-Catholic writers identify two approaches to use when “disproving” the Real Presence. Jimmy Swaggart summarized them this way: “In all honesty we must repudiate this dogma on two counts: (1) It is opposed to Scripture. (2) It is contradicted by the evidence of the senses.”²

Fundamentalists concentrate on the first count, the argument from “the evidence of the senses” being weak since even a rudimentary understanding of transubstantiation makes one realize that the dogma, by definition, cannot be refuted through an appeal to sensory perception since there is not *supposed* to be any perceptible change to the eucharistic elements. Besides, an argument based on the senses must be an argument based on science or philosophy, and fundamentalists prefer to argue from the Bible.

In arguing from Scripture, every fundamentalist says Christ was speaking metaphorically in John 6 and during the Last Supper. Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics International, says that “if I were to show someone a photograph of my son and say, ‘This is my son’, they [*sic*] would not take these words literally. The Scripture is written with such common language that it is obvious to any observant reader that the Lord’s Supper was intended primarily as a memorial and in no sense a literal sacrifice. In taking Biblical statements literally, we must be sure that doing so is consistent with the context and not in contradiction to other clear teaching.” Brewer also argues that “when Jesus said ‘this is my body’ or ‘blood’, he did not change the substance, but was explaining that he is the one ‘represented’ by the passover bread and wine. Jesus did not say *touto gignetai*, this has become or is turned into, but *touto esti*, which can only mean this represents or stands for.”³ Brewer’s Greek is deficient here. *Esti* is nothing else than the verb “is”. Its usual meaning is the literal, although it can be used figuratively, just as in English. If this crucial term is supposed to be read as “represents”, why was it not clearly put so in the Greek?

Brewer continues: “It is perfectly clear in the Gospels that Christ spoke in figurative terms, referring to Himself as ‘the door’, ‘the vine’, ‘the light’, ‘the

root', 'the rock', 'the bright and morning star', et cetera.”⁴ In this Brewer is seconded by Donald F. Maconaghie of the Conversion Center: “It is clear that our Lord used a sign or figure which the Council of Trent would have us cursed for believing when He said, ‘Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood ye have no life in you’ John 6:53. Was our Lord transubstantiated into a literal door? He said, ‘I am the door’ John 10:9. Or into a vine? He said, ‘I am the true vine’ John 15:1. Notice we also read: ‘The ten horns are ten kings’ Daniel 7:24. ‘These great beasts which are four, are four kings’ Daniel 7:17. ‘The seven kine are seven years’ Genesis 41:26.”⁵

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty answered this common charge years ago: “There is no logical parallel between the words ‘This is My body’ and ‘I am the vine’ or ‘I am the door.’ For the images of the vine and door can have, of their very nature, a symbolical sense. Christ is like a vine because all the sap of my spiritual life comes from Him. He is like a door since I go to heaven through Him. But a piece of bread is in no way like His flesh. Of its very nature it cannot symbolize the actual body of Christ. And he excludes that Himself by saying, ‘The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world, and My flesh is meat indeed.’ That is, it is to be actually eaten, not merely commemorated in some symbolical way.”⁶

Not surprisingly, Swaggart agrees with Maconaghie and Brewer. He writes, “*This is my body . . . this is my blood*, are accepted literally in Catholic dogma. On the same basis we should accept without thinking that Jesus gives us literal living waters which will produce eternal life (John 4:14), or that Jesus is truly a door (John 10:7-9), that He is a lamb (John 1:29), or that He is a growing vine (John 15:5). If the Catholic hierarchy is to be consistent, they [*sic*] should foster adoration of doors, vines, and lambs. Certainly, these figures of speech are descriptive and colorful, but they are transparently figurative, just as are the terms ‘my body,’ and ‘my blood’. The New Testament Church and the Early Church understood and accepted this just as it was offered, *as a figure of speech*.”⁷

Is that so? Let us see what the Early Church thought.

Writing to the Smyrnaeans around 110 and referring to “those who hold heterodox opinions”, Ignatius of Antioch said, “They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness, raised up again.”⁸

Forty years later, Justin Martyr wrote, “We call this food Eucharist, and no

one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.”⁹

Irenaeus of Lyons, in his masterwork, *Against Heresies*, written toward the close of the second century, said that Christ “has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own Blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own Body, from which he gives increase to our bodies”. He asks, “If the Lord were from other than the Father, how could he rightly take bread, which is of the same creation as our own, and confess it to be his Body and affirm that the mixture in the cup is his Blood?”¹⁰

Origen, writing about 244, demonstrated that reverence is given to the smallest particle from the host. “I wish to admonish you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence.”¹¹

Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, said this in his *Sermon to the Newly Baptized*, delivered in 373: “You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine and placing them on a table. So long as the prayers of supplication and entreaties have not been made, there is only bread and wine. But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the bread is become the Body, and the wine the Blood, of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹²

As a final example, taken from dozens that could have been used, Cyril of Jerusalem, in his *Catechetical Lectures*, presented in the middle of the fourth century, told his listeners: “Do not, therefore, regard the Bread and Wine as simply that; for they are, according to the Master’s declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by

faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the Body and Blood of Christ.”¹³

Whatever else might be said, it is certain that the early Church took John 6 and the accounts of the Last Supper literally. There is no record in the early centuries of any Christian doubting the Catholic interpretation. There exists no document in which the literal interpretation is opposed and only the metaphorical accepted. Brewer persists by saying, “The doctrine of transubstantiation does not date back to the Last Supper as is supposed. . . . The idea of a corporal presence was vaguely held by some, such as Ambrose, but it was not until 831 A.D. that Paschasius Radbertus, a Benedictine monk, published a treatise openly advocating the doctrine of transubstantiation. Even then, for almost another four hundred years, theological war was waged over this teaching by bishops and people alike until at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D., it was officially defined and canonized as a dogma.”¹⁴

This is misleading. First of all, the Real Presence was not “vaguely” held by Ambrose. In his treatise *The Sacraments*, composed about 390, he wrote, “You may perhaps say: ‘My bread is ordinary.’ But that bread is bread before the words of the sacraments; where the consecration has entered in, the bread becomes the flesh of Christ. And let us add this: How can what is bread be the Body of Christ? By the consecration. The consecration takes place by certain words, but whose words? Those of the Lord Jesus. . . Therefore it is the word of Christ that confects the sacrament.”¹⁵ Nothing vague about that.

And what about Paschasius Radbertus? Was he the first to believe in transubstantiation? Radbertus was abbot of Old Corbie Monastery near Amiens. In 831 he composed a treatise that contained this ambiguous expression: “This is precisely the same flesh that was born of Mary, suffered on the Cross, and rose from the tomb.”¹⁶ He narrated some eucharistic miracles that gave the impression that Christ must be understood to be sensibly present in the sacrament, and another monk at his abbey, Ratramus, wrote a countertreatise noting that one must distinguish between the appearance of Christ in the Eucharist and the appearance of his body received from Mary, but *he* used language that might suggest Christ is only symbolically present in the Eucharist. Both Radbertus and Ratramus were orthodox; the trouble was that neither was precise in wording.

“The debate between these principals soon became a theological free-for-all”, said historian Newman Eberhardt.¹⁷ Others entered the fray, sometimes proposing rectifying language that was even more confusing than what

Radbertus and Ratramus wrote. The dispute ended by 860, with no one denying the Real Presence. What should be noted is that, despite various attempts to phrase the doctrine of the Real Presence accurately, there was no cry from anyone that this was a new doctrine. It was taken as a given. Those who inadvertently implied the Presence might be symbolic only were considered the innovators, not those who presumed it was Real.

In the theological world there was no further controversy on the issue until Berengarius of Tours, who died in 1088. He had studied the dispute that began with Radbertus and Ratramus and concluded that Christ was indeed present only symbolically. He repeatedly signed recantations and then, safe at home, reiterated his original position. This theological seesaw went on for decades, until he finally subscribed to an unambiguous formula. Church historians say he apparently died reconciled.¹⁸ Whether or not he did, he is the first Christian, so far as we can tell from the records, who denied the Real Presence. Paschasius Radbertus and Berengarius of Tours are remembered to history only because the one seemed to doubt the Real Presence and the other actually did. What this tells us is that the accepted belief was the opposite of what they were understood to hold.

Back to the words of the text. Keith Green identified in his *Catholic Chronicles* two biblical passages as the keys to the Catholic position. The first is John 6:55-56: “The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood enjoys eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink.” Green said that “with just a little study of the whole passage (verses 27-71), it is clear that Jesus was not talking about physical, but spiritual food and drink.” He argued that since Jesus says “he who comes to me will never be hungry” (Jn 6:35), “*to come to Him* is to ‘eat’!” Similarly, since Jesus tells us in the same verse that “he who has faith in me will never know thirst”, it follows that “*to believe on Him* is to ‘drink’!”¹⁹

Bart Brewer concurs. “These verses actually disprove the dogma of transubstantiation. The ones who took Jesus’ words literally were offended. That is why He clarified their misunderstanding by teaching them that what he said was to be understood spiritually (see verse 63). . . . Looking back to verse 47, it is obvious that ‘eating’ is equivalent to ‘believing.’ It is certain that what is meant by eating this flesh and drinking this blood is neither more nor less than ‘believing’ in Christ,”²⁰ In short, the command to eat Christ’s flesh and drink his blood must be taken metaphorically.

But there is a problem with that. As John A. O'Brien put it, "the phrase 'to eat the flesh and drink the blood', when used figuratively among the Jews, as among the Arabs of today, meant to inflict upon a person some serious injury, especially by calumny or by false accusation. To interpret the phrase figuratively then would be to make our Lord promise life everlasting to the culprit for slandering and hating Him, which would reduce the whole passage to utter nonsense."²¹ Christ would be saying, "He that reviles me has eternal life."

The scriptural argument is capped, by all fundamentalist writers, with an appeal to John 6:64: "Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life." This is a verse to which fundamentalists always return, and it was, by the way, the first verse that Jimmy Swaggart threw at Catholic writer Barbara Nauer when they discussed the interpretation of this chapter. She was stunned by his use of the line, for the very good reason that in the context of the narration it can be seen not to relate to the question they were examining, which was: Is the Real Presence real? Swaggart thought this verse more than compensated for the apparent (and literal) meaning of the earlier part of John 6, He interpreted Nauer's pause as a silent acknowledgement of defeat, when in fact she was trying to understand what this non sequitur had to do with the issue at hand.²² Did Swaggart think that Christ, who had just commanded his disciples to eat his flesh, now said their doing so would be pointless? Is that what "the flesh is of no avail" means? "Eat my flesh, but you'll find it's a waste of time"—is that how he was to be understood? And were the disciples to understand the line "the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life" as nothing but a circumlocution, and a fairly clumsy one at that, for "symbolic"? No one can come up with interpretations like these unless he first holds to the fundamentalist position and thinks it necessary to find some rationale, no matter how tortuous, for discarding the Catholic interpretation.

In John 6:64 the word "flesh" is not used in the same sense as in John 6:53-59. It is being used more in the Pauline sense, in which it is contrasted with "spirit". The contrast is between unaided nature and nature elevated by grace. Compare John 3:6: "What is born by natural birth is a thing of nature, what is born by spiritual birth is a thing of spirit." Christ detects in some of his listeners an unsupernatural attitude that looks for earthly rewards and that turns away from his teaching on the Eucharist. When he says "the flesh is of no avail", he does not mean "my flesh"—that would contradict his

immediately prior remarks. He means instead carnal understanding, as distinguished from spiritual.

Return to Keith Green. He examined John 6:55-56, the first of the passages he identified as key, and then turned to the second, Matthew 26:26, 28: “This is my body . . . this is my blood.” He noted that

Catholics base their whole religious system on their interpretation of these two verses. They adamantly teach that right here, Jesus is pronouncing the first priestly blessing that mysteriously changes the bread and wine into his body and blood. The absolute folly of such a conclusion is proved by this one observation: *He was literally still there* before, during, and after they had partaken of the bread and cup! He had not changed into some liquid and bread—His flesh was still on His bones, and His blood was still in His veins. He had not vanished away to reappear in the form of a piece of bread or a cup of wine!²³

So here we have the diabolically clever Catholic Church telling us the transformation was real, yet Jesus was still at the table. Catholic exegetes through the centuries missed the fact that he was still present, that he did not disappear in a puff of smoke and end up on the platter and in the cup. How stupid Catholics have been, to miss the obvious! (Perhaps this just shows that *none* of them ever read beyond John 6:28; if any Catholic had, he could have blown the whistle, and the Church would not have made such a fool of itself.) This is the loose thinking fundamentalists end up with if they conclude, as they do, that the answer to the Catholic position is elementary because the Catholic position is so clearly erroneous.

The reply to Green is simple: Christ was present at the Last Supper in two ways. He was present at the table in a natural way, as were the apostles, and he was present in the eucharistic elements in a sacramental way, which is precisely the way he is present in them today, in Catholic churches throughout the world. That Christ can be present in two ways simultaneously is indeed a mystery (a mystery being a religious truth that cannot be comprehended fully by reason), but it is not an impossibility. Something does not become impossible simply because we cannot understand it. After all, God is present everywhere—all Christians acknowledge that—and that is as much a mystery as Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. Are we to deny God’s omnipresence because we cannot conceive how he pulls it off? If Christ, who was on earth in a natural body and now reigns in heaven in a glorified body, can make the world out of nothing, certainly he can make bread and wine into his own Body and Blood. That should not be hard to accept, no matter how hard it might be to fathom. There is no good reason to limit God’s acts to the

extent of our understanding.

The fundamentalists' problem is that theirs is a religion almost entirely lacking in the mysterious. More precisely, they readily acknowledge only those mysteries that are purely spiritual, such as the Trinity. They know the doctrine of the Trinity has been revealed, that something about the Trinity can be known, that certain deductions can be drawn from what is known; and they realize the essence of the Trinity lies beyond human comprehension, and they are happy to leave it at that. When it comes to mysteries that involve the mixing of spirit and matter, a kind of Docetism shows.

For fundamentalists the sacraments are out because they necessitate a spiritual reality, grace, being conveyed by means of matter. This seems a violation of the divine plan. Matter is not to be used, but overcome or avoided, and in this lies the unease with which they view the Incarnation. One suspects that, had they been asked by the Creator their opinion of how to effect mankind's salvation, they would have advised him to adopt an approach that would have appealed to Mary Baker Eddy. How much cleaner things would be if spirit never dirtied itself with matter! But God, quite literally, loves matter, and he loves it so much that he comes to us under the appearance of bread and wine. There is no contradiction in Christ being both physically and sacramentally present.

The verses fundamentalists have the hardest time with are 1 Corinthians 11:26-30: "So it is the Lord's death that you are heralding, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, until he comes. And therefore, if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, he will be held to account for the Lord's body and blood. [Douay-Rheims translation: ". . . shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord".] A man must examine himself first, and then eat of that bread and drink of that cup; he is eating and drinking damnation to himself if he eats and drinks unworthily, not recognizing the Lord's body for what it is." And what should it be recognized as? A mere metaphor? Then how can receiving unworthily be equated with being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"?

"Plain and simple reason", observed Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman more than a century ago in his *Lectures on the Real Presence*, "seems to tell us that the presence of Christ's body is necessary for an offense committed against it. A man cannot be 'guilty of majesty' unless the majesty exists in the object against which his crime is committed. In like manner, an offender against the Blessed Eucharist cannot be described as guilty of Christ's Body and Blood,

if these be not present in the Sacrament.”²⁴

“How could a person be guilty, if he had merely eaten a little bread and drunk a little wine, as a picture or representation or reminder of the Last Supper?” asked Rumble and Carty more recently. “No one is guilty of homicide if he merely does violence to the picture or statue of a man without touching the man in person. St. Paul’s words are meaningless without the dogma of the Real Presence.”²⁵ They may indeed then be meaningless, but fundamentalists would rather live with a meaningless Real Absence than a meaning-full Real Presence.

Chapter 20

The Mass

There is no mistaking it. Fundamentalists do not like the Mass, and they like it even less than they otherwise might because they misunderstand what it is. Jimmy Swaggart says, “The Roman Catholic church teaches that the Holy Mass is an expiatory (sin removing) sacrifice, in which the Son of God is actually sacrificed anew on the cross.”¹ Loraine Boettner calls the Mass a “jumble of medieval superstition”.² Keith Green called the Mass blasphemous because there can be no continuing offering for sin, Christ having died “once for all”.³ One comfortably may assume these men never read an official Catholic explanation of the Mass—or, if they did, that they did not understand it. Each could have turned for help to Vatican II, which put the Catholic position succinctly:

At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.⁴

One does not need to read the documents of Vatican II to know Catholics say the Mass was instituted at the Last Supper. Any modestly informed Catholic can set an inquirer right on this and direct him to the biblical accounts of the final night Jesus was with his disciples. Anyone turning to the text would find these words: “Then he took bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, given for you; do this for a commemoration of me” (Lk 22:19). The Greek here and in the parallel Gospel passages (Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22) reads: *Touto estin to soma mou*. It is given slightly differently by Paul: *Touto mou estin to soma* (1 Cor 11:24). They all translate as “This is my body.” The verb *estin* is the equivalent of the English “is” and can mean “is really” or “is figuratively”. The usual meaning of *estin* is the former, just as, in English, the verb is usually taken in the real or literal sense.

Fundamentalists, of course, insist Christ, in saying, “This is my body”, spoke only a trope. This interpretation is precluded by Paul’s discussion of the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 23-24 and by the whole tenor of John 6, the chapter where the Eucharist is promised. The Greek word for “body” in John 6 is *sarx*, which can only mean physical flesh, and the word for “eat” translates as “gnaws” or “chews”. This is not the language of metaphor.

The literal meaning cannot be avoided except through violence to the text—and through the rejection of the universal understanding of the early Christian centuries. The writings of Paul and John reflect belief in a Presence that is Real. There is no basis for forcing anything else out of the lines, and no writer tried to do so until the early Middle Ages. In short, Christ did not institute a Figurative Presence.

Sometimes fundamentalists say the use of the word “is” can be explained by the fact that Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ, had no word for “represents”. Jesus just had to do the best he could with a restricted vocabulary. Those who make this claim are behind the times, even for fundamentalists, most of whom now acknowledge that such an argument is feeble since, as Cardinal Wiseman showed a century ago, Aramaic has about three dozen words that can mean “represents”,⁵ so Christ would have had no difficulty at all in giving an unmistakable equivalent of “this represents my body.”

There have been attempts to get around the plain sense of the passage by wishing the words away. James Moffatt produced his second translation of the New Testament in 1913; it gives Matthew 26:26 and parallel passages this way: “Take and eat this, it means my body.” With this Moffatt ceased to be a translator and became an interpreter. Present-day fundamentalists do not rely on his version of the New Testament, generally preferring the Authorized Version instead, but Moffatt’s lapse from scholarly proprieties (what Arnold Lunn called “a glaring example of the subordination of scholarship to sectarian prejudice”)⁶ is indicative of the problems the accounts of the Last Supper cause people who refuse to take the words at face value.

As if the Catholic claim about the reality of the Real Presence were not bad enough, the Church insists that the Mass is the continuation and re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary. It is *not* a re-Crucifixion of Christ. He does not suffer and die again. On the other hand, it is more than just a memorial service.

John A. O’Brien says:

The manner in which the sacrifices are offered is alone different: on the Cross Christ really shed His blood and was really slain; in the Mass, however, there is no real shedding of blood, no real death; but the separate consecration of the bread and of the wine symbolizes the separation of the body and blood of Christ and thus symbolizes His death upon the Cross. The Mass is the renewal and perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross in the sense that it offers anew to God the Victim of Calvary and thus commemorates the sacrifice of the Cross, reenacts it symbolically and mystically, and applies the fruits of Christ's death upon the Cross to individual human souls. All the efficacy of the Mass is derived, therefore, from the sacrifice of Calvary.⁷

Keith Green would not have bought such an explanation. The second of Green's *Catholic Chronicles* is called *The Sacrifice of the Mass*. The subtitle is *Jesus Dies Again*, which aptly summarizes Green's position. Though Green now presumably knows better, having had a chance to obtain the proper interpretation of the Bible from the Author himself, people who rely on his writings apparently do not, so let us take a look at what he thought while here below.

His tract asks:

Have you ever wondered why in every Catholic church they still have Jesus up on the cross? Every crucifix with Jesus portrayed as nailed to it tells the whole Catholic story—Jesus is still dying for the sins of the world! But that's a lie! We need only look to the Scriptures to see the truth. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the 'once for all' sacrifice of Christ on the cross, not a daily sacrifice on altars. The Bible repeatedly affirms in the clearest and most positive terms that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was complete in that one offering. And that it was never to be repeated is set forth explicitly in Hebrews, chapters 7, 9, and 10.

Green then quotes Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 9:25-28; and 10:10-14. (The Catholic reader should review these passages; Hebrews 9:28, for instance, reads: "Christ was offered once for all, to drain the cup of the world's sins.") Green notes that "throughout these verses occurs the statement 'once for all' which shows how perfect, complete, and final Jesus' sacrifice was! . . . Any pretense of a continuous offering for sin is worse than vain, it is blasphemy and true fulfillment of the Scripture, 'Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame' " (Heb 6:6). Green does not mention the context in which Hebrews 6:6 is placed. It has nothing directly to do with the Mass. Instead, the first verses of the chapter deal with those who fall away from the Faith after baptism. Forgiveness of their sins cannot come through a second baptism, since there is only one baptism established by Christ. What do they want? the sacred writer asks. Do they want a new baptism to be given through a second Crucifixion? That is the only way it could happen. "Would they crucify the Son of God a second time, hold him

up to mockery a second time, for their own ends?”

This verse simply does not say what Green thought it did. Nor do the others. The Catholic Church specifically says Christ does not die again—his death is indeed once for all—but that does not contradict the doctrine of the Mass. It would be something else if the Church were to claim he *does* die again, but it does not make that claim. A re-presenting of the original sacrifice does not necessitate a new Crucifixion.

Keith Green has not been the only fundamentalist writer, of course, to disapprove of the Mass. “It must not be supposed for a minute”, warns Loraine Boettner in *Roman Catholicism*, “that modern Roman Catholics do not literally believe this jumble of medieval superstition. They have been taught it from infancy, and they do believe it. It is the very sternest doctrine of their church. It is one of the chief doctrines, if indeed it is not the chief doctrine, upon which their church rests.”⁸ Boettner’s argument is summarized in one paragraph. It is worth quoting at length. He says:

This doctrine of the mass, of course, is based on the assumption that the words of Christ, “This is my body” and “This is my blood” (Matt. 26:26-28), must be taken literally. The accounts of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, both in the Gospels and in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, make it perfectly clear that He spoke in figurative terms. Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). And Paul quotes Jesus as saying: “This is the new covenant in my blood. . . . For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor 11:25-26). In these words He used a double figure of speech. The cup is put for the wine, and the wine is called the new covenant. The cup was not literally the new covenant, although it is declared to be so as definitely as the bread is declared to be His body. They did not literally drink the cup, nor did they literally drink the new covenant. How ridiculous to say that they did! Nor was the bread literally His body, or the wine His blood. After giving the wine to the disciples Jesus said: “I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come” (Luke 22:18). So the wine, even as He gave it to them, and after he had given it to them, remained “the fruit of the vine”!⁹

Boettner continues by giving a cleverly incomplete quotation. He writes, “Paul too says that the bread remains bread: ‘Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner. . . . But let each man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup’ ” (1 Cor 11:27-28).¹⁰ The part of verse 27 represented by the ellipsis is crucial. It reads: “shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”. Why does Boettner omit this? Because to be guilty of someone’s body and blood is to revile him, and one can hardly revile baked flour or fermented grape juice. This omitted line makes no sense at all unless it means a profanation of the

sacrament is something serious, and it clearly implies the bread and wine become Christ himself.

Boettner is not through. He has to mimic the early pagan opponents to Christianity by saying that “another and more important proof that the bread and wine are not changed into the literal and actual flesh and blood of Christ is this: the literal interpretation makes the sacrament a form of *cannibalism*. For that is precisely what cannibalism is—the eating of human flesh. Rome attempts to deny this, but without much logic.”¹¹ Peter Stravinskis turns this charge on its head and uses it to make an important observation. Allegations of cannibalism actually backfire on fundamentalists because, in bringing the topic up today, they encourage Catholics to note that it was brought up centuries ago. Stravinskis notes that “both Tertullian and Minucius Felix. . . give considerable attention in their second-century writings to the charge of cannibalism being leveled against the Church. A belief in the Real Presence thus clearly existed in the Early Church, for no ‘simple memorial supper’ would have evoked such specific and violent charges from the general pagan population.”¹²

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty also addressed the cannibalism claim.

When Christ promised that He would give His very flesh to eat, the Jews protested because they imagined a natural and cannibalistic eating of Christ’s body. Christ refuted this notion of the manner in which His flesh was to be received by saying that He would ascend into heaven, not leaving His body in its human form upon earth. But He did not say that they were not to eat His actual body. He would thus contradict Himself, for a little earlier He had said, “My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed” John 6:56. He meant, therefore, “You will not be asked to eat My flesh in the horrible and natural way you think, for My body as you see it with your eyes will be gone from this earth. Yet I shall leave my flesh and blood in another and supernatural way which your natural and carnal minds cannot understand. The carnal or fleshly judgment profits nothing. I ask you, therefore, to have faith in Me. It is the spirit of faith which will enable you to believe, not your natural judgment.”¹³

Another fundamentalist dissatisfied with the Mass is Ralph Woodrow. He presents his view in *Babylon Mystery Religion* by giving in full a poem he acknowledges to be crude. The author is listed as anonymous, and with good reason. The poem is called “A Roman Miracle”, and in forty lines it tells the story of a Protestant woman who married a Catholic. One day her husband brought his priest to dinner in order to effect her conversion. After the priest gave his counsel, they all agreed to meet again, and he promised to confect the sacrament in her presence if she would prepare the bread. He returned, did as he said, and prepared to eat. At the last moment she warned him that

“half an ounce of arsenic was mixed right in the batter, / But since you have its nature changed, it cannot really matter.” The priest, of course, ran away, eating nothing, and the contrite husband turned to his wife, saying: “To gulp such mummery and tripe, I’m not for sure, quite able; / I’ll go with you and we’ll renounce this Roman Catholic fable.”¹⁴

The literary worth of the poem is as modest as Woodrow’s understanding of transubstantiation. On Catholic principles, the priest was quite right, of course, to refuse to eat, for the simple reason that only the bread, not the poison, could be transubstantiated. Anything mixed with the bread would have remained unaltered (assuming the mixture would not have been unconfectable matter in the first place), and the bread would have retained the appearance and properties of bread. The arsenic would have remained poison. Transubstantiation would not have made the arsenic disappear, but this is something Woodrow seems not to realize. He just wants to poke fun at Catholics who “play” with bread and wine, but a review of Genesis might give him pause.

The Old Testament predicted that Christ would offer a true sacrifice to God in bread and wine—that he would use those elements. Melchisedech, the king of Salem and a priest, offered sacrifice under the form of bread and wine (Gen 14:18). Psalm no predicted Christ would be a priest “according to the order of Melchisedech”, that is, offering a sacrifice in bread and wine. We must, then, look for some sacrifice other than Calvary, since it was not under the form of bread and wine. The Mass fits the bill.

Joseph Zacchello, revealer of *Secrets of Romanism*, demurs: “Melchisedech brought bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his followers, not to sacrifice. The Roman version is a mistranslation. It translates ‘*And he was a priest*’, as follows: ‘*For he was a priest*’, in order to make it appear that he brought forth bread and wine in his official capacity as a priest to offer sacrifice with them.”¹⁵ Zacchello grasps for straws. The conjunction “and” in Greek often has the force of “for”, so here “and he was a priest” means the same as “for he was a priest”. What is more, “according to the order of Melchisedech” means “in the manner of Melchisedech” (“order” not referring, of course, to the modern notion of a religious order, there being no such thing in Old Testament days). The only “manner” shown by Melchisedech was the use of bread and wine. A priest sacrifices the items offered—that is the main task of all priests, in all cultures, at all times—so the bread and wine must have been what Melchisedech sacrificed. He did not

bring these elements along just because he thought it might be time for Abraham's lunch.

Fundamentalists sometimes admit Christ followed the example of Melchisedech at the Last Supper, but claim it was a rite that was not to be continued. They undermine their opposition to the Mass in saying this, since such an admission shows, at least, that the Last Supper was truly sacrificial. The key, though, is that they overlook that Christ said, "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Lk 22:19). Clearly, he was not talking about a one-time thing.

It is this command that makes fundamentalists uncomfortable. They think its Catholic interpretation minimizes the salvific work of Christ. Not so. "If all people were saved in that one momentous occasion," asks Stravinskis, "why does the Church continue to offer the sacrifice of the Mass? Because the salvation promised and earned is conditional; because it is contingent upon our acceptance of Jesus, our desire to be saved, and our living of a lifestyle which demonstrates an understanding of what life in Christ means. Since we were not present, we need to be reminded of what God has done for us. Our remembrance and ritual re-enactment of the event make it happen again—for us."¹⁶

One should keep in mind that, after foretelling the rejection of the Jewish priesthood, the prophet Malachi predicted a new sacrifice would be offered in every place. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is a sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation" (Malachi 1:10-11). Note that he speaks of one sacrifice, not many sacrifices, but one that is offered everywhere. The sacrifice of Calvary took place in one place only. We must look for a sacrifice apart from Calvary, one that is given under the form of bread and wine. Only the Mass meets the requirements.

As might be expected, fundamentalists put little stock in claims about the antiquity of the sacrificial aspects of the Mass, even if they think the Mass, in the form of a mere commemorative meal, commenced with the Last Supper. Many say the Mass as a sacrifice was not taught until the Middle Ages, alleging Innocent III was the first Pope to teach the doctrine. He merely insisted on a doctrine that had been held from the first but was being publicly doubted in his time. He formalized, but did not invent, the notion that the Mass is a sacrifice. Jimmy Swaggart, for one, goes further back than do most fundamentalists, claiming, "By the third century the idea of sacrifice had

begun to intrude.”¹⁷ Still other fundamentalists say Cyprian of Carthage was the first to mention a sacrifice.¹⁸ Irenaeus, writing *Against Heresies* in the second century, was ahead of Cyprian when he wrote of the sacrificial nature of the Mass,¹⁹ and Clement of Rome in his turn was ahead of Irenaeus when he wrote about those “from the episcopate who blamelessly and holily have offered its Sacrifices”.²⁰ It simply is not possible to get closer to New Testament times than this because Clement was writing *during* New Testament times. After all, at least one apostle, John, was still alive.

Fundamentalists are particularly upset about the Catholic notion that the sacrifice on Calvary is somehow continued through the centuries by the Mass. To them it seems Catholics are trying to have it both ways. The Church on the one hand says that Calvary is “perpetuated”, which seems to mean the same act of killing, the same letting of blood, is repeated again and again. This violates the “once for all” idea, fundamentalists claim. On the other hand, what Catholics call a sacrifice seems in fact to have no relation to biblical sacrifices since it does not look the same; after all, no splotches of blood are to be found on Catholic altars. “We must, of course, take strong exception to such pretended sacrifice”, Boettner instructs.

We cannot regard it as anything other than a deception, a mockery, and an abomination before God. The so-called sacrifice of the mass certainly is not identical with that on Calvary, regardless of what the priests may say. There is in the mass no real Christ, no suffering, and no bleeding. And a bloodless sacrifice is ineffectual. The writer of the book of Hebrews says that “apart from shedding of blood there is no remission” of sin (9:22); and John says, “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Since admittedly there is no blood in the mass, it simply cannot be a sacrifice for sin.²¹

Boettner misreads chapter 9 of Hebrews, which begins with an examination of the Old Covenant. Moses is described as taking the blood of calves and goats and using it in the purification of the tabernacle (Heb 9:19-21; see Ex 24:6-8 for the origins of this). “And if such purification was needed for what was but a representation of the heavenly world, the heavenly world itself will need sacrifices more availing still. The sanctuary into which Jesus has entered is not one made by human hands, is not some adumbration of the truth; he has entered heaven itself, where he now appears in God’s sight on our behalf. Nor does he make a repeated offering of himself, as the high priest, when he enters the sanctuary, makes a yearly offering of the blood that is not his own” (Heb 9:23-25). So it was under the Old Law that a repeated blood sacrifice

was necessary for the remission of sins. Under the Christian dispensation, blood (Christ's) is shed only once, but it is continually offered to the Father.

How can that be? ask fundamentalists. They have to keep in mind that "what Jesus Christ was yesterday, and is today, he remains for ever" (Heb 13:8). What Jesus did in the past is present to God now, and God can make the sacrifice of Calvary present to us at Mass. "So it is the Lord's death you are heralding, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

In the final analysis, what makes the Mass literally unbelievable for fundamentalists is that they cannot conceive of a single act that is perpetuated through time. For them, what happened on Calvary happened there alone and remains in the dead past. They see Catholic priests conducting a sacrifice today and conclude that today's sacrifice must be distinct from Calvary's. If it really is a sacrifice, it is an attempt to replay Calvary in the most literal way—which, they know, is quite impossible. Christ cannot be killed again. So, for fundamentalists, what priests do at the altar really reduces to a show. Priests may think they are re-presenting the same sacrifice, but fundamentalists know they are only playacting.

It is fundamentalists' sense of the mysterious, their sense of the supernatural, that is undeveloped. Ask them about the nature of the afterlife. One will receive no enlightening answer, maybe no answer at all. It is as if they have hardly thought about the subject. Just what is the spiritual life like, anyway? It hardly does any good to say people will be happy in heaven. Some people are happy in the Bronx, but heaven must be something other than a superlative version of a New York borough. Having been instructed poorly in the supernatural as such, fundamentalists have not given it much thought, and they have trouble imagining that God is actually beyond time. They usually think of eternity as being nothing but endless years, a time line that disappears into the mists at each end, and they do not think of Calvary being in a perpetual Now.

They could imagine, say, several Jewish priests, all at about the same time, offering what could be termed a single sacrifice in the Temple. First one comes in, then another, and a few minutes later a third. They can see how three separate acts of offering could be considered a single sacrifice, if the three acts are nearly simultaneous. But thousands, millions of Masses through the centuries, each Mass like the others, but each quite different in appearance from Calvary itself? How can we say they are all the

representation of that original Sacrifice? If they cannot imagine the continuity being not so much in time, which is marked by days and hours, but outside of time, which is a single Now, they cannot help but think Catholics are trying to pull a fast one. It requires a determined refocusing of the mind to see things from the Catholic perspective, and this is not easy for fundamentalists to accomplish. It is far easier for Catholics to put themselves in fundamentalist shoes than for fundamentalists to step into ours. It is something like the problem that even Catholics have in getting a right appreciation of the Eucharist.

“You see, we are so materialistic”, noted Ronald Knox in *The Window in the Wall*,

our minds are so chained to the things of sense, that we imagine our Lord as instituting the Blessed Sacrament with bread and wine as the remote matter of it because bread and wine reminded him of that grace which he intended the Blessed Sacrament to bestow. But, if you come to think of it, it was just the other way about. When he created the worlds, he gave common bread and wine for our use in order that we might understand what the Blessed Sacrament was when it came to be instituted. He did not design the Sacred Host to be something like bread. He designed bread to be something like the Sacred Host.^{[22](#)}

One who has trouble grasping this insight will understand how difficult it is for fundamentalists to get a true appreciation of the Catholic doctrine of the Mass. They are so accustomed to reading the relevant biblical verses in a particular way that they cannot see there is far more than initially meets their eyes.

Chapter 21

Honoring the Saints

A diocesan priest, a man who always seemed to have the right words for the occasion, was celebrating a nuptial Mass. The bride had been raised a Catholic, but the groom had not. He was a recent convert. His entire family and almost all his friends at the wedding were non-Catholics. Since many of the bride's friends were not Catholics either, few people at the Mass understood what was going on. The priest therefore interspersed his liturgical duties with explanations.

It is traditional, at the conclusion of the ceremony, for the bride to take a bouquet to a side altar and lay it at the feet of a statue of the Virgin, at the same time praying that she might emulate Mary as a wife and mother. When the time came for that gesture, the priest commented that the placing of the flowers is done because “we Catholics worship Mary”. There was a collective sigh from the few Catholics in the church and a collective gasp from the non-Catholics, who apparently had their worst suspicions confirmed.

Was the priest right or wrong? Well, probably both. He was right in his understanding of the word “worship”, although he was using it in what is almost an archaic sense. He was surely wrong in using it in front of people who would misunderstand his meaning. After all, in common speech worship means adoration given to God alone. In this sense Catholics do not worship Mary or any of the other saints. But in an older usage the term worship means not just adoration of God but the honor given to anyone deserving honor.

Begin with the word itself. It comes from the Old English *weorthscipe*, which means the condition of being worthy of honor, respect, or dignity. To worship in the older, larger sense is to ascribe honor, worth, or excellence to someone, whether a sage, a magistrate, or God. But there are different kinds of worship as there are different kinds of honor. The highest honor, and thus the highest worship, is given to God alone, while the honor or worship given to living men or to saints in heaven is of a different sort. Idolatry thus does not simply mean giving worship (in the old sense) to living men or to saints;

it means giving them the kind reserved for God.

Nowadays there is a problem with using the word because in the popular mind it refers to God alone. For practical purposes it has come to mean nothing else than adoration. Although it was commonly used in the wider sense as recently as the nineteenth century (when, for instance, Orestes Brownson, perhaps the foremost Catholic intellectual America has produced, wrote *The Worship of Mary*), it is perhaps too confusing to use it that way now, as the example of the priest shows. It is no doubt wise to restrict its use to God and to use for saints and others terms such as honor and veneration.

Is this a distinction without a difference? It would be if the honor given to God were the same as the honor given to a saint. But it is not.

Consider how honor is given. We regularly give it to public officials. In the United States it is customary to address a judge as “Your Honor”. (It has been the British custom to address certain magistrates—here it comes—as “Your Worship”, but that is another can of worms.) In the marriage ceremony it used to be said that the wife would “love, honor, and obey” her husband. On Mount Sinai there was a command given to “honor thy father and thy mother” (Ex 20:12). Letters to legislators are addressed to “The Hon. So-and-So”. And just about anyone, living or dead, who bears an exalted rank is said to be worthy of honor, and that is particularly true of historical figures, as when children are, or at least used to be, instructed to honor the Founding Fathers.

So, if there can be nothing wrong with honoring the living, who still have an opportunity to ruin their lives through sin, or the uncanonized dead, about whose state of spiritual health we can only guess, certainly there can be no argument against giving honor to saints whose lives are done and who ended them in sanctity. If merit deserves to be honored wherever it is found, it surely should be honored among God’s special friends.

When we speak of honoring saints and particularly Mary, the greatest of the saints, what do we mean? How is this honor demonstrated? One way is through art. Our regard for the saints is shown through the employment of statues or paintings, just as we honor a deceased relative by keeping his photograph on the mantelpiece. It is said by fundamentalists, of course, that Catholics worship statues. Not only is this untrue, it is even untrue that Catholics honor statues. After all, a statue is nothing but a carved block of marble or a chunk of plaster, and no one gives honor to marble yet unquarried or plaster still in the mixing bowl.

The fact that someone kneels before a statue to pray does not mean that he is praying to the statue, just as the fact that one kneels with a Bible in his hands—as fundamentalists at times do—does not mean that he is worshipping the Bible. Statues or paintings or other artistic devices are used to recall to the mind the person or thing depicted. Just as it is easier to remember one's mother by looking at her photograph, so it is easier to recall the lives of the saints, and thus be edified by their examples, by looking at representations of them.

More important than honor shown to saints through artistic expression is the honor shown through personal communication, through prayer. Catholics honor saints, and particularly Mary, by praying to them and asking them to intercede with God on their behalf. This immediately brings up the question: Can saints in heaven hear us? After all, with extraordinarily rare exceptions, any communication with them seems to be at best a one-way street. True, there have been apparitions of Mary and some saints to a few individuals, but the Church has repeatedly said that no one is obliged to believe that these take place or to place any credence in what is said during them. Private revelations are binding only on the individuals to whom they are made; belief in them is not necessary for salvation. So, if we discount such instances, it seems that prayers go to the saints but that no unmistakable answers are received from them. So how do we know they hear us?

For the Catholic the answer can be almost deceptively simple: We know, because the Church tells us so. However satisfying such an answer may be to those who believe in the Magisterium and think there is a good reason to accept its teachings, it is hardly convincing to fundamentalists, who are unable to find any comfort in hagiographical accounts—or even in historical accounts of such things as Fatima.¹

The fundamentalists' chief problem in accepting that saints can hear prayers is that their notions of heaven and the afterlife are attenuated. For many of them the afterlife is hardly a life at all. They, like many Christians, draw a blank when they try to explain what heaven is like. Some can imagine nothing other than the stereotypic harps and choirs. Others say heaven is an impenetrable haze and that all we can know is that we will be happy there.

One thing that certainly can be said is that those in heaven are alive to God. "Have you never read in the book of Moses how God spoke to him at the burning bush, and said, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' Yet it is of living men, not dead men, that he is the God"

(Mk 12:26-27). The saints in heaven are more alive now than we are. In the arms of God, they are more solicitous of us than when they were on earth. Just as Paul asked the other disciples to pray for him (Rom 15:30; Col 4:3; 1 Th 1:11), so now we can ask Paul and the other saints in heaven to intercede for us with God. We are not cut off from fellow Christians at death, but are, strangely enough and contrary to our unreflecting thoughts, brought closer. We continue in one communion, the communion of saints.

To fundamentalists the term communion of saints and its allied term, the Mystical Body of Christ, mean nothing. They have never heard of them, except for those who once were Catholics, and probably none of *them* ever understood the phrases. It is enough to remind fundamentalists of the image of the vine and its branches (Jn 15:1-8). They accept this as a metaphor of our relation to Christ, he being the vine, we the branches that live through him. They can see that if we are connected to Christ, we are connected to one another, but they tend to forget that those in heaven are not suddenly cut off from the vine. The saints remain as branches, which, if the symbolism means anything, means they remain related to us.

Paul develops Christ's teaching about the Mystical Body, about the vine and branches. He sees Christ as the head, the members of the Church as the body. The acts of any one member are profitable to all the members. "There was to be no want of unity in the body; all the different parts of it were to make each other's welfare their common care. If one part is suffering, all the rest suffer with it; if one part is treated with honor, all the rest find pleasure in it. And you are Christ's body, organs of it depending on each other" (1 Cor 12:25-27). He goes on, saying, "Each of us has one body, with many different parts, and not all these parts have the same function; just so we, though many in number, form one body in Christ, and each acts as the counterpart of another" (Rom 12:4-5).

A natural, even a necessary, inference from this teaching is intercessory prayer, which Paul requests for himself and all the saints: "Only, brethren, I entreat you by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Holy Spirit, to give me the help of your prayers to God on my behalf" (Rom 15:30); "offer your supplication for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). Here, of course, Paul is writing about the members of the Church Militant, but his teaching on the Mystical Body implies that prayers unite us with the Church Triumphant, too.

While the Bible does not explicitly refer to the veneration and invocation of saints, there is scriptural warrant for the practice. First there is the

reverence offered angels (Jos 5:14; Dan 8:17; Tob 12:16). This reverence is predicated on the angels' supernatural dignity, which comes from their union with God (Mt 18:10). Since the saints are also united with God (1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2), it follows that they are also worthy of reverence.

The ancient Jews believed in the intercession of saints. Judas Maccabaeus saw in a vision "most worthy of credence" how two deceased men, the high priest Onias and the prophet Jeremiah, interceded with God for the Jews (2 Mace 15:11-16). And Jeremiah himself wrote that Moses and Samuel made intercession for the Jews, apparently meaning after their deaths (Jer 15:1). We learn that angels and saints place the prayers of the holy on earth at God's feet (Tob 12:12; Rev 5:8, 8:3), which is to say that they support the prayers with their intercessions. These verses also mean, apparently, that the angels and saints are the ones prayed to and that they then take these prayers to God.

John Henry Newman said that, in Revelation,

the sacred writer goes so far as to speak of "grace and peace" being sent to us, not only from the Almighty, but "from the seven Spirits that are before His throne", thus associating the Eternal with the ministers of His mercies; and this carries us on to the remarkable passage of St. Justin, one of the earliest Fathers, who, in his Apology, says, "To Him (God), and His Son who came from Him, and taught us these things, and the host of other good Angels who follow and resemble Him, and the Prophetic Spirit, we pay reverence and homage."

Newman then said that "one instance is given us, which testifies to the continuation of so high an office beyond this life. Lazarus, in the parable, is seen in Abraham's bosom. It is usual to pass over this striking passage with the remark that it is a Jewish expression; whereas, Jewish belief or not, it is recognised and sanctioned by our Lord Himself."² If Dives could pray to Lazarus (that must have been how he spoke to him) across the unbridgeable abyss, then why should we not be able to pray to saints across an abyss they have successfully crossed and we hope to cross?

But why ask the saints to pray to God on one's behalf? Why not pray to God directly? After all, ask fundamentalists, isn't Christ the one mediator (1 Tim 2:5), and do not the saints become mediators in violation of that if they pray for us? Orestes Brownson answered the first of these questions in a series of articles he wrote for *Ave Maria* magazine in 1865 and 1866. "But still it is asked", Brownson noted,

what need to pray the saints at all, and why not pray directly to God himself, since he is infinitely nearer to us, and more ready and able to help us than any saint is or can be? In reply, I answer that Catholics do pray directly to God, and perhaps even more than, they do who reject prayers to

the saints; and I might ask, in our turn, why pray even directly to God, since he knows all our wants better than we ourselves know them, knows what we are going to pray for before the prayer is formed in our own heart, and is infinitely more willing to help us than we are to ask his help? The same principle that justifies prayer to God justifies prayers to the saints to intercede for us.³

Brownson also answered the charge that saints cannot hear our prayers.

But it is alleged, even by persons who call themselves Christians, that however well disposed the saints might be to intercede for us, they cannot hear our invocations, and therefore our prayers to them are vain and even superstitious. If they cannot hear us, our prayers to them *are* unquestionably superstitious, and not to be tolerated. But wherefore can they not hear us? Are they not living men and women—even more living than when they tabernacled with us? . . . There can be no communion where there is no medium of communication. We who live have a medium of communication with those who have gone to their reward and therefore form one communion with them. This medium is Christ himself, who is the head of every man, and whose life is the life of all who are begotten anew by the Holy Ghost. . . . There is no more mystery in the way the saints hear our invocations than there is in the way we hear one another. Mystery there is, but it is the same mystery in both cases, and it would be absurd to maintain that we do not hear one another because we cannot explain how we do it. There being a medium of communication between us and the saints, and they and we forming only one communion, one body of our Lord, being members of him and members of one another, nothing can be more reasonable, more natural even, than that we should invoke their prayers, and that they should intercede for us. It is in accordance alike with the order of nature and the order of grace.⁴

In response to fundamentalists' other question, about Christ being the one mediator, consider what we do for one another now. We pray for others, and we ask others to pray for us. By doing so we indeed act as mediators since we pray to God on behalf of others, and our friends are mediators for us. (Attend a fundamentalist service and see how Brother This and Sister That ask the congregation to "pray over them"; fundamentalists' theories are often contradicted by their acts.) This prayer for one another does not violate Christ's role as the one mediator, because ours is a secondary mediatorship that is entirely dependent on his. Paul asked his friends to pray for him as he prayed for them, and today Christians do the same, but none of this violates the truth that without Christ our prayers to the Father would be ineffectual.

A common objection to prayer to the saints is stated by Loraine Boettner:

How, then, can a human being such as Mary hear the prayers of millions of Roman Catholics, in many different countries, praying in many different languages, all at the same time? Let any priest or layman try to converse with only three people at the same time and see how impossible that is for a human being. . . . The objections against prayers to Mary apply equally against prayers to the saints. For they too are only creatures, infinitely less than God, able to be at only one place at a time and to do only one thing at a time. How, then, can they listen to and answer

thousands upon thousands of petitions made simultaneously in many different lands and in many different languages? Many such petitions are expressed, not orally, but only mentally, silently. How can Mary and the saints, without being like God, be present everywhere and know the secrets of all hearts?⁵

Ex-priest Joseph Zacchello quotes at length from John Hunkley's *How I Became a Non-Catholic*. Hunkley took pencil and paper, estimated how many times a day Rosaries are recited around the world, timed how long it takes to say a Hail Mary, and determined that Mary would "have to listen to 46,296 petitions at one and the same time, simultaneously, every second of time from one end of the year to the other". But no one except God can listen to so many petitions at once, he claimed, which means either Mary cannot hear them, or Catholics think she is divine,⁶

If being in heaven were like being in the next room, then such objections would be valid. Someone in the next room would indeed suffer the restrictions posed by space and time. But the saints are not in the next room, and heaven has no space or time. In heaven everything happens in one great Present; there is neither past nor future in our sense of the terms. When God looks at his creation, he sees all of it at once, all that has been, all that now is, all that will be. It is by his sufferance we communicate with one another on earth, and he likewise lets us communicate with the saints in heaven—who, like God, are outside of space and time. To say that they do not have time to listen to many prayers at once is to commit a basic error—they do not have time at all, because they are beyond time. This does not imply that they therefore must be omniscient as is God, for it is only through God's willing it that they can communicate with others in heaven or with us.

Chapter 22

Marian Beliefs

The Marian doctrines are, for fundamentalists, among the most annoying of the doctrines people identify as peculiarly Catholic. Fundamentalists disapprove of any talk about Mary as the Mother of God, as the Mediatrix, as the Mother of the Church; they disbelieve in her Immaculate Conception, do not think she was assumed into heaven, and hold that she was not a lifelong virgin. For many fundamentalists, Catholicism is little more than a subordination of basic Christianity (C. S. Lewis' "mere Christianity") to a confusing skein of Marian beliefs; they see these beliefs as interfering with, even canceling, the proper attitude toward Christ. Let us examine the Marian doctrines fundamentalist writers most frequently complain about.

Immaculate Conception

Catholic exegetes, in discussing the Immaculate Conception, begin with the Annunciation. Gabriel greeted Mary by saying "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Lk 1:28). This is the traditional rendering, based on the Vulgate. The phrase "full of grace" is a translation, by way of the Latin, of the Greek *kecharitomene*, but it is not a transliteration. In Greek, "full of grace" would be *pleres charitos*, which is used for Christ in John 1:14 and for Stephen in Acts 6:8, not *kecharitomene*.

Newer translations, based directly on the Greek, render Luke 1:28 as "Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you" (New Jerusalem Bible) or "Rejoice, O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you" (New American Bible). These translations are imperfect, since they give the impression that the favor bestowed on Mary was no different from that given other women in the Bible.¹ If she had been merely "highly favored", in the normal connotation of those words (and it is the normal connotation that many people will read here), her status would have been indistinguishable from that of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; or Sarah, the wife of Abraham; or Anna, the mother of Samuel—all of whom, by the way, were

long childless and were “highly favored” because God acceded to their pleas to bear children.

“*Charts* means favor, disinterested benevolence, coming from God”, explains Rene Laurentin. “Does this mean that *kecharitomene* means only the extrinsic favor of God? From two points of view it means much more.” Both theologically and philologically, he says, the word indicates “a transformation of the subject”. The sense is not just “to look upon with favor, but to transform by this favor or grace”.² *Kecharitomene*, then, signifies a plenitude of favor or grace.

The newer translations leave out something the Greek conveys, something the older translation conveys, which is that this grace (and the core of the word *kecharitomene* is *charts*, after all) is at once permanent and of a singular kind. The Greek indicates a perfection of grace. A perfection must be perfect not only intensively, but extensively. The grace Mary enjoyed must not only have been as “full” or strong or complete as possible at any given, time, but it must have extended over the whole of her life, from conception. That is, she must have been in a state of sanctifying grace from the first moment of her existence to have been called “full of grace” or to have been filled with divine favor in a singular way. This is just what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception holds: that Mary, “in the first instant of her conception was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, preserved exempt from all stain of original sin”.³

(One should keep in mind what the Immaculate Conception is *not*. Some non-Catholics think the term refers to Christ’s conception in Mary’s womb without the intervention of a human father; the proper name for that is the Virgin Birth. Others think the Immaculate Conception means Mary herself was conceived “by the power of the Holy Spirit”, in the way Jesus was, but it does not. The Immaculate Conception means that Mary, whose conception was brought about the normal way, was conceived in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin. The essence of original sin consists in the lack of sanctifying grace. Mary was preserved from this defect; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace.)

Fundamentalists’ chief reason for objecting to the Immaculate Conception and Mary’s consequent sinlessness—which is what her lifelong state of sanctifying grace implies—is that Mary was but a creature, and we are told that “all have sinned” (Rom 3:23). Besides, they say, Mary said her “spirit

rejoices in God my Savior” (Lk 1:47), and only a sinner needs a Savior. Since Mary was a sinner, she could not have been immaculately conceived.

Take the second citation first. The Church has a simple and sensible answer to this difficulty. It is this: Mary, too, required a Savior. Like all other descendants of Adam, by her nature she was subject to the necessity of contracting original sin. But by a special intervention of God, undertaken at the instant she was conceived, she was preserved from the stain of original sin and certain of its consequences. She was therefore redeemed by the grace of Christ, but in a special way, by anticipation. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception thus does not contradict Luke 1:47.

What about Romans 3:23, “all have sinned”? Fundamentalists, as a rule, think it means more than that everyone is subject to original sin. They think it means everyone commits actual sins. They conclude it means Mary must have sinned during her life, and that certainly would speak against an Immaculate Conception. Is the fundamentalists’ analysis solid? Not really. Think about a child below the age of reason. By definition he cannot sin, since sinning requires the ability to reason and the ability to intend to sin. If the child dies before ever committing an actual sin, because he is not mature enough to know what he is doing, what act of his brings him under their interpretation of Romans 3:23? None, of course.

Paul’s comment to the Christians in Rome thus would seem to have one of two meanings. Despite the phrasing, it might be that it refers not to absolutely everyone, but just to the mass of mankind (which means young children and other special cases, such as Mary, would be excluded without having to be singled out). If not that, then it would mean that everyone, without exception, is subject to original sin, which is true for a young child, for the unborn, even for Mary—but she, although due to be subject to it, was preserved from its stain.

It took a positive act of God to keep her from coming under its effects the way we have. We had the stain of original sin removed through baptism, which brings sanctifying grace to the soul, thus making the soul spiritually alive and capable of enjoying heaven, and makes the recipient a member of the Church. We might say that Mary received a very special kind of “baptism” at her conception, but, because since she never contracted original sin, she enjoyed certain privileges we never can, such as entire avoidance of sin.

On occasion one will hear that the Immaculate Conception cannot be

squared with Mary's own description of herself: "He has looked graciously on the lowliness of his handmaid" (Lk 1:48). How could she be lowly if she were, as Catholics say, the highest creature, what the poet Wordsworth called "our tainted nature's solitary boast"?⁴ If she understood herself to be lowly, does that not mean she understood herself to have sinned?

The key is that sin is not the only motive for lowliness. Compared to God, any creature, no matter how perfect, is lowly, Mary included. Jesus, referring to his human nature, said, "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29). Certainly he was without sin, and if he could describe himself as lowly, there can be no argument against Mary describing herself the same way.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was officially defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854. When fundamentalists claim that the doctrine was "invented" at this time, they misunderstand both the history of dogmas and what prompts the Church to issue, from time to time, definitive pronouncements regarding faith or morals. They are under the impression that no dogma is believed until the Pope or an ecumenical council issues a formal statement about it.

Actually, dogmas are defined formally only when there is a controversy that needs to be cleared up or when the Magisterium thinks the faithful can be helped by particular emphasis being drawn to some already-existing belief. The definition of the Immaculate Conception was prompted by the latter motive; it did not come about because there were widespread doubts about the doctrine. Pius IX, who was highly devoted to the Virgin, hoped the definition would inspire others in their devotion to her.

The Assumption

As they reject the Immaculate Conception and Mary's perpetual virginity, so fundamentalists reject the dogma of the Assumption, but they do not worry about it much. What little thought they give to it concerns why Catholics think Mary did not die. That is not the Catholic position, of course, but fundamentalists think it is, and they are concerned about a privilege that finds no warrant in Scripture.

They note that Enoch "walked with God, and he was seen no more because God took him" (Gen 5:24). He was translated so as not to see death (Heb 11:5). Then there was Elijah, who was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot

(2 Kings 2:1-13). The Bible says nothing about what happened to Mary, they note, and does it not seem there would be some mention of her never dying? After all, it would have been truly “remark-able”.

There is a certain sense in their argument, and if the doctrine of the Assumption were what they think it is, the argument would carry some weight. But it is beside the point because Catholic commentators, not to mention the Popes, have agreed that Mary died; that belief has long been expressed through the liturgy. (The Church has never formally defined whether she died or not, and the integrity of the doctrine of the Assumption would not be impaired if she did not die, but the almost universal consensus is that she did in fact die.) The Assumption is therefore simpler than fundamentalists fear, although still not acceptable to them. In 1950 Pope Pius XII, in an exercise of papal infallibility, defined that Mary, “after the completion of her earthly life”—note the silence regarding her death—“was assumed body and soul into the glory of Heaven”.⁵ In short, her body was not allowed to corrupt; it was not allowed to remain in a tomb.

(It is also necessary to keep in mind what the Assumption is *not*. Some people think Catholics believe Mary “ascended” into heaven. That is not correct. Christ, by his own power, ascended into heaven. Mary was assumed or taken up into heaven by God. She did not do it under her own power.)

True, no express scriptural proofs for the doctrine are available. The possibility of a bodily assumption before the Second Coming is not excluded by 1 Corinthians 15:23, and it is even suggested by Matthew 27:52-53: “and the graves were opened, and many bodies arose out of them, bodies of holy men gone to their rest: who, after his rising again, left their graves and went into the holy city, where they were seen by many”.

There is also what might be called the negative historical proof. As every fundamentalist knows, from the first Catholics gave homage to saints, including many about whom we now know nothing. Cities vied for the title of the last resting place of the most famous saints. Rome, for example, claims the tombs of Peter and Paul, Peter’s tomb being under the high altar of the Basilica that bears his name. Other cities claim the mortal remains of other saints, both famous and obscure. We know the bones of some saints were distributed to several cities, so more than one, for example, are able to claim the “head” of this or that saint, even if the “head” is only a small portion of the skull. With a few exceptions (such as Peter, who was only claimed by Rome, never, for example, by Antioch, where he worked before moving on to

Rome), the more famous or important the saint, the more cities wanted his relics.

We know that after the Crucifixion Mary was cared for by the apostle John (Jn 19:26-27). Early Christian writings say John went to live at Ephesus and that Mary accompanied him. There is some dispute about where she ended life; perhaps there, perhaps back at Jerusalem. Neither those cities nor any other claimed her remains, although there are claims about possessing her (temporary) tomb. Why did no city claim the bones of Mary? Apparently because there were no bones to claim and people knew it.

Remember, in the early Christian centuries relics of saints were jealously guarded, highly prized. The bones of those martyred in the Colosseum, for instance, were quickly gathered up and preserved; there are many accounts of this in the biographies of those who gave their lives for the Faith. Yet here was Mary, certainly the most privileged of all the saints, certainly the most saintly, but we have no record of her bodily remains being venerated anywhere.

Most arguments in favor of the Assumption, as developed over the centuries by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, concern not so much scriptural references (there are few that speak even indirectly to the matter), but rather the fittingness of the privilege. The speculative grounds considered include Mary's freedom from sin, her Motherhood of God, her perpetual virginity, and—the key—her participation in the salvific work of Christ. It seems most fitting that she should attain the full fruit of the Redemption, which is the glorification of the soul and body.

Yet there is more than just fittingness. Pius XII said the Assumption is really a consequence of the Immaculate Conception. "These two singular privileges bestowed upon the Mother of God stand out in most splendid light at the beginning and the end of her earthly journey. For the greatest possible glorification of her virgin body is the complement, at once appropriate and marvelous, of the absolute innocence of her soul, which was free from all stain. . . [S]he shared in Christ's glorious triumph over sin and its sad consequences."⁶

"But", ask fundamentalists, "if Mary was immaculately conceived, and if death was a consequence of original sin, why did she die?" Although she was wholly innocent and never committed a sin, she died in order to be in union with Jesus. Keep in mind that he did not have to die to effect our redemption; he could have just willed it, and that would have been sufficient. But he

chose to die. Mary identified herself with his work, her whole life being a cooperation with God's plan of salvation, certainly from her saying, "Let it be done to me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38), but really from the very start of her life. She accepted death as Jesus accepted death, and she suffered (Lk 2:35) in union with his suffering. Just as she shared in his work, she shared in his glorification. She shared in his Resurrection by having her glorified body taken into heaven, the way the glorified bodies of all the saved will be taken into heaven on the Last Day.

Still, fundamentalists ask, where is the proof from Scripture? Strictly, there is none. It was the Catholic Church that was commissioned by Christ to teach all nations and to teach them infallibly. The mere fact that the Church teaches the doctrine of the Assumption as something definitely true is a guarantee that it *is* true. Here, of course, we get into an entirely separate matter, the question of *sola scriptura*, which is considered elsewhere. It is enough to say there is no problem with an infallible Church officially defining a doctrine that, although not in contradiction to Scripture, cannot be found on its face. After all, the Bible says nothing against the Assumption; silence is not the same as rejection, although, to be sure, silence is not the same as affirmation either. Silence is just—silence.

The Mother of God

Frank Sheed said that Louisa Cozens, "who earned her daily-bread scrubbing floors", "had as gifted a theological mind as I have met",⁷ although she had only a primary school education. In 1928 she spent many evenings, after work, at the apartment where Sheed and his wife, Maisie Ward, lived because it was the only quiet place she could write. There, without reference books, she composed *A Handbook of Heresies*, probably the best small-compass account of departures from the Faith. It covers everything from Ebionism to modernism.

Cozens had a knack for getting right to the pith. In her discussion of Nestorianism, named after the bishop of Constantinople who, around 429, declared that Mary was the Mother of Christ, but not the Mother of God, thereby denying the hypostatic union, Cozens noted that "Protestants, if asked to declare their belief in the Incarnation, nearly always define it in terms which prove their underlying Nestorianism. Even when they are willing to say that Jesus Christ is God, they shrink from the Catholic statement, that

God was born of Mary; that God shed his blood for us on Calvary; that God died. Today as in the fifth century, in London as at Ephesus, the honour of Mary is the safeguard, the outpost of the adoration of her son. To acknowledge the *Theotokos* ["God-bearer"] is to believe in God the Son made man."⁸

Little wonder, then, that fundamentalists, who are in so many ways archetypal Protestants, cringe when they hear Catholics refer to the Virgin as the Mother of God. How can God have a Mother, they ask, since that would imply she is older than God? The question is laughable for Catholics, but fundamentalists take it seriously. It is not the real reason, of course, that they disapprove of the idea of *Theotokos*. They do not say to themselves that they would call Mary the Mother of God if only this question of chronology could be answered to their satisfaction.

Their real objection is that the phrase "Mother of God" elevates Mary too much. Sure, they say, she was Christ's mother, Jesus' mother, and no doubt a good woman, but otherwise undistinguished. They perceive God as being so "wholly other" that there is a real, if unperceived, difficulty in their accepting the Incarnation in its fullest sense. It is easy for them to fall into Nestorius' position; he held that the union of the two natures in Christ was little more than a moral union of two distinct persons, the divine Son and the human Jesus. So very often, when fundamentalists discuss the matter privately and at length, they end up saying the same thing, all because of their effort to escape honoring Mary.

The answer to difficulties regarding Mary's status as the Mother of God can be explained only by noting the distinction between personhood and nature. Fundamentalists say Mary was the mother of Christ's human nature, not the mother of his divine nature, but with a little effort they can be brought to see that this is wrong. After all, was your mother the mother of your human nature? No, she was the mother of *you*. It is a *person* who is conceived and born, not a *nature*. What person was born of Mary? A divine Person only, not a human person—but a divine Person who took on a human nature. The one born of Mary "shall be called the son of God" (Lk 1:35), and "God sent his son, made of a woman" (Gal 4:4).

To say that Christ was a human person is to deny the hypostatic union. Most fundamentalists do not know that term—they are confused, too, about the distinction between person and nature—but they can perceive the contradiction inherent in their position if someone shows it to them. They can

see that if Mary was not the Mother of God, then she was the mother only of Christ as a human person. They can see that *if that* was the case, then Christ was two distinct persons, a human person and a divine Person. But this is something fundamentalists do not believe; they acknowledge one Person in two natures, even if they have trouble stating the belief as such.

So there is a logical, but not psychological, contradiction here. If thought through, they would see that their position on the *Theotokos* leads to an impossible conclusion, but they have not thought it through because fundamentalism's spirit is antitheological, antispeculative. It holds theorizing on religious matters to be an invitation to heterodoxy, a view that stems from its insistence that Christian truth is ultimately experienced, not known, that will is higher than intellect. This makes for endless difficulties when Catholics and fundamentalists sit down to talk, since the latter are suspicious of syllogisms. The difficulties can be overcome with patience and an awareness that there are often unmentioned presuppositions that have to be handled first if a discussion is to get anywhere.

Mary as Mediatrix

Fundamentalists think Catholics put Mary on a par with her Son. After all, what is the word mediatrix but the feminine of mediator? Do not Catholics go even further, calling Mary the Mediatrix of all graces? Does this not deny Christ's role as the one Mediator?

The contradiction here is illusory. As Thomas Aquinas said in reference to 2 Corinthians 5:19, "Christ alone is the perfect mediator of God and men, inasmuch as, by his death, he reconciled the human race to God. . . . However, nothing hinders certain others from being called mediators, in some respect, between God and man, forasmuch as they cooperate in uniting men to God, dispositively or ministerially."⁹ After all, we mediate for others when we pray to God on their behalf, which, of course, is something fundamentalists themselves do. This does not argue against Christ being the sole Mediator, because our modest efforts are entirely dependent on him. In a far more perfect way, Mary shares in his mediation. Her status as Mediatrix of all graces exists in a double sense.

First, she gave the world its Redeemer, the source of all graces, and in this sense she is the channel of all graces. She freely cooperated with God's plan (Lk 1:38: "Be it done to me according to thy word"), and, as St. Thomas

wrote, at the Annunciation, at the key moment for our race, she represented the whole of humanity.¹⁰ The Fathers of the Church contrast Mary's obedience, which was perfectly free, with Eve's disobedience.

Second, Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces because of her intercession for us in heaven. What this means is that no grace accrues to us without her intercession. We are not to suppose that we are obliged to ask for all graces through her or that her intercession is intrinsically necessary for the application of graces. Instead, through God's will, grace is not conferred on anyone without Mary's cooperation.

True, scriptural proofs for this are lacking. Theologians refer to a mystical interpretation of John 19:26 ("Woman behold thy son, son behold thy mother"), an interpretation that sees John as the representative of the human race, Mary thus becoming the spiritual mother. They note the doctrine is reasonable because it is fitting.

This is little consolation to fundamentalists, of course, who see little fitting about it and who put little stock in speculative theology and even less in mystical theology. As a practical matter, this kind of doctrine is one of the last accepted by someone approaching the Church, particularly someone coming to the Church from fundamentalism, and it is accepted, ultimately, on the authority of the Church rather than on the authority of clear scriptural references. Fundamentalists, always looking for a biblical citation, can see no reason to accept a belief in Mary as Mediatrix of all graces, but they can, if they take the effort, come to see that there is, at least, nothing in the doctrine that contradicts Christ's role as the one Mediator. His role as Mediator is not lessened because she has been allowed to assist him.

The Veneration of Mary

To fundamentalists, the veneration of Mary is nothing other than the worship of Mary, as shown by their use of the term Mariolatry. They really believe Catholics put Mary on the same level as God. Some of their complaints seem ridiculous to Catholics. The most common, perhaps, is that in the Rosary ten prayers are said to Mary for every one said to the Father.¹¹ The implication is usually left unspoken, but one is supposed to conclude, apparently, that Catholics prefer Mary ten to one over God. Looked at this way, the Rosary becomes a medieval Gallup poll.

Bill Jackson writes about Mary in his *Christian's Guide to Roman*

Catholicism. He explains that “the rise in devotion to her came when a backslidden church, having lost the reality of Christ, was presented with the pagan concept of a female deity and she was deemed able to mediate between them and a God Who was too far away”.¹² One of the problems with this argument is timing. Paganism effectively disappeared by the end of the sixth century, but devotion to Mary of a sort seen today was not common until the Middle Ages, by which time paganism was not even a distant memory.

Granted, there is a certain logic in claiming Catholicism adopted pagan ways when paganism was still vibrant. In fact, this is exactly what fundamentalists claim when they say Catholicism, as distinguished from Christianity, arose at the beginning of the fourth century, when Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire. Most Romans were still pagans, they note, so it made sense for the Catholic authorities to curry favor with adherents of the majority religion. They do not realize their argument undercuts any claim that the Church appealed to paganism in promoting the veneration of the Virgin. There were no pagans left in the former Roman territory as the Middle Ages opened, so what could be gained by taking on a devotion designed to appeal to them?

One of the favorite tactics of fundamentalists, in disparaging the honors given to Mary, is to quote from some Marian devotional works. Chief among them is Alphonsus Liguori’s *The Glories of Mary*, which is still popular and still in print. Liguori’s book is a source of one-liners that, taken out of context (and his context is often a page or more, or even a whole chapter), seem to put Mary not just on a par with her Son, but above him. It is not easy dealing with a writer, even a saint, whose style is full of literary conceits and hyperbolic statements. *The Glories of Mary* is precisely the kind of book one should not press into the hands of a non-Catholic who has no appreciation of the Church’s position on Mary—not because it is wrong and not because it reveals “secrets” reserved for the initiated, but because it is not easy to understand.

It is a matter of sequence, a matter of the groundwork that needs to be done first. There is no question that Liguori is orthodox, of course, and that his writings are enlightening, but they are simply too much for a fundamentalist to absorb. In reading Liguori, all the fundamentalist’s fears seem confirmed, and that is only to be expected, since he has no appreciation of what the Catholic position on Mary really is and—what is just as bad—no appreciation of the style of religious writing that was popular in the eighteenth century,

when Liguori wrote. It is remarkably easy for a fundamentalist to be frightened away from the Church. He needs to be shown Catholicism slowly, much the way the Faith was revealed only in increments to the catechumens of the early centuries. The fundamentalist feels real revulsion at doctrines he understands poorly, such as the Marian doctrines, but he can be brought to understand and even to adhere to them if the proper foundation is laid.

Mary's Perpetual Virginity

“When Catholics call Mary the Virgin, they mean she remained a virgin throughout her life. When Protestants use the term, they mean she was a virgin only until the birth of Jesus; they believe that she and Joseph later had children, all those called “the brethren of the Lord”. What gives rise to the disagreement are biblical verses that use the terms “brethren”, “brother”, or “sister”.

These are representative verses; “While he was still speaking to the multitude, it chanced that his mother and his brethren were standing without, desiring speech with him” (Mt 12:46); “Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Do not his sisters live here near us?” (Mk 6:3); “For even his brethren were without faith in him” (Jn 7:5); “All these, with one mind, gave themselves up to prayer, together with Mary the mother of Jesus, and the rest of the women and his brethren” (Acts 1:14); “Have we not the right to travel about with a woman who is a sister, as the other apostles do, as the Lord’s brethren do, and Cephas?” (1 Cor 9:5).

The first thing to note, when trying to understand such verses, is that the term “brother” has a wide meaning in the Bible. It is not restricted to brothers german or half brothers. The same goes for “sister” and the plural “brethren”. Lot is described as Abraham’s “brother” (Gen 14:14), but Lot was the son of Aran, Abraham’s deceased brother (Gen 11:26-28); this means Lot was really Abraham’s nephew. Jacob is called the “brother” of his uncle Laban (Gen 29:15). Cis and Eleazar were the sons of Moholi; Cis had sons of his own, but Eleazar had no sons, only daughters, who married their “brethren”, the sons of Cis. These “brethren” were really their cousins (1 Chron 23:21-22),

The terms “brethren”, “brother”, and “sister” did not refer only to close relatives, as in the above examples. Sometimes they meant only a kinsman (Dt 23:7; 2 Esd 5:7; Jer 34:9), as in the reference to the forty-two “brethren”

of king Ochozias (2 Kings 10:13-14). The words could mean even people apparently unrelated, such as a friend (2 Sam 1:26; 1 Kings 9:13, 20:32), or just an ally (Amos 1:9).

Why this ambiguous usage? Because neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ and his disciples, had a special word meaning “cousin”. Speakers of those languages used either the word for “brother” or a circumlocution, such as “the son of the sister of my father”. Using a circumlocution was a clumsy way to speak, so they naturally fell to using the word “brother”.

The writers of the New Testament were brought up to use the Aramaic equivalent of “brethren” to mean both cousins and sons of the same father—plus other relatives and even nonrelatives. When they wrote in Greek, they did the same thing the translators of the Septuagint did. In the Septuagint the Hebrew word that includes both true brothers and cousins was translated as *adelphos*, which in Greek has the (usually) narrow meaning that the English “brother” has. Unlike Hebrew or Aramaic, Greek has a separate word for cousin, *anepsios*, but the translators of the Septuagint favored *adelphos*, even for true cousins.

One might say they transliterated instead of translated. They took an exact equivalent of the Hebrew word for “brother” and did not use *adelphos* here (for sons of the same parents), *anepsios* there (for cousins). This same usage was employed by the writers of the New Testament and passed into English translations of the Bible. To determine just what “brethren” or “brother” or “sister” means in any one verse, we must look at the context. When we do that, we see insuperable problems arise if we assume that Mary had children other than Jesus.

At the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she asked, “How can that be, since I have no knowledge of man?” (Lk 1:34). From the earliest interpretations of the Bible we see that this was taken to mean that she had made a vow of lifelong virginity, even in marriage. If she had taken no such vow, the question would make no sense at all.

There is no reason to assume Mary was wholly ignorant of the rudiments of biology. She presumably knew the normal way in which children are conceived. If she anticipated having children and did not intend to maintain a vow of virginity, she would hardly have to ask “how” she was to have a child, since having a child the normal way would be expected by a newlywed. No, her question makes sense only if there was an apparent, but

not a real, conflict between keeping a vow of virginity and acceding to the angel's request. A careful look at the New Testament shows Mary kept her vow and never had any children other than Jesus.

In the story of his being found in the Temple, Jesus, at age twelve, is mentioned as evidently the only Son of Mary (Lk 2:41-51); there is no hint of other children in the family. The people of Nazareth, where he grew up, refer to him as "the son of Mary" (Mk 6:3), not as "a son of Mary". The Greek expression implies he is her only son. In fact, others in the Gospels are never referred to as Mary's sons, not even when they are called Jesus' "brethren". If they were in fact her sons, this would be strange usage.

There is another point, perhaps a little harder for moderns, or at least Westerners, to grasp. It is that the attitude taken by the "brethren of the Lord" implies they are his elders. In ancient and, particularly, in Eastern societies (remember, the Holy Land is in Asia), older sons gave advice to younger, but younger never gave advice to older—it was considered disrespectful to do so. But we find Jesus' "brethren" saying to him that Galilee was no place for him and that he should go to Judaea so his disciples could see his doings, so he could make a name for himself (Jn 7:3-4). Another time, they sought to restrain him for his own benefit, saying, "He must be mad" (Mk 3:21). This kind of behavior could make sense for ancient Jews only if the "brethren" were older than Jesus, but that alone eliminates them as his brothers german, since Jesus, we know, was Mary's "first-born".

Consider what happened at the foot of the Cross. When he was dying, Jesus entrusted his Mother to the apostle John: "Jesus, seeing his mother there, and the disciple, too, whom he loved, standing by, said to his mother, Woman, this is thy son. Then he said to the disciple, this is thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own keeping" (Jn 19:26-27). The Gospels mention four "brethren", James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude, It is hard to imagine why Jesus would have disregarded family ties and made this provision for his Mother if these four were also her sons.

Fundamentalists are insistent nevertheless that "brethren of the Lord" must be interpreted in the strict sense. They most commonly make two arguments based on this verse: "And he knew her not till she brought forth her first-born son" (Mt 1:25). They first argue that the natural inference from "till" is that Joseph and Mary afterward lived together as husband and wife, in the usual sense, and had several children. Otherwise, they ask, bringing up their second point, why would Jesus be called "first-born"? Does that not mean there must

have been at least a “second-born”, perhaps a “third-born” and “fourth-born”, and so on?

The problem for them is that they are trying to use the modern meaning of “till” (or “until”) instead of the meaning it had when the Bible was written. In the Bible, it means only that some action did not happen up to a certain point; it does not imply that the action did happen later, which is the modern sense of the term. In fact, if the modern sense is forced on the Bible, some ridiculous meanings result.

Consider this fine: “Michal the daughter of Saul had no children until the day of her death” (2 Sam 6:23). Are we to assume she had children after her death? How about the raven that Noah released from the ark? The bird “went forth and did not return till the waters were dried up upon the earth” (Gen 8:7). In fact, we know the raven never returned at all. Then there was the burial of Moses. About the location of his grave it was said that no man knows “until this present day” (Dt 34:6)—but we know that no one has known since that day either. Or how about this: “And they went up to mount Sion with joy and gladness, and offered holocausts, because not one of them was slain till they had returned in peace” (1 Mace 5:54). Does this mean the soldiers were slain after they returned from battle?

The examples could be multiplied, but there should be no need. It should be clear that nothing at all can be proved from the use of the word “till” in Matthew 1:25. Recent translations give a better sense of the verse: “He had no relations with her at any time before she bore a son” (New American Bible); “he had not known her when she bore a son” (Knox translation).

The other argument used by fundamentalists concerns the term “first-born”. They say Jesus could not be called Mary’s “firstborn” unless there were other children that followed him. This is a misunderstanding of the way the ancient Jews used the term. For them it meant the child that opened the womb (Ex 13:2; Nb 3:12). Under the Mosaic law, it was the “first-born” son that was to be sanctified (Ex 34:20). Did this mean the parents had to wait until a second son was born before they could call their first the “first-born”? Hardly. The first male child of a marriage was termed the “first-born” even if he turned out to be the only child of the marriage. This usage is illustrated by a funerary inscription discovered in Egypt. The inscription refers to a woman who died during the birth of her “first-born”.

Fundamentalists also say it would have been repugnant for Mary and Joseph to enter a marriage and yet remain virgins. They call married virginity

an “unnatural” arrangement. Certainly it is unusual, but not as unusual as having the Son of God in one’s family, not as unusual as having a true virgin give birth to a child. The Holy Family was neither an average family nor even one suited to be chosen as “family of the year” from among a large number of similarly situated families. We should not expect its members to act as we would. The Holy Family is the ideal family, but not because it is like “regular” families in all major respects, only better. In major respects it is totally unlike any other family. The circumstances demanded that, just as they demanded the utmost in sacrifice on the part of Mary and Joseph. This was a special family, set aside for the nurture of the Son of God. No greater dignity could be given to marriage than that.

Backing up the testimony of Scripture regarding Mary’s perpetual virginity is the testimony of early Christian writings. Consider the controversy between Jerome and Helvidius. It was Helvidius, writing around 380, who first brought up the notion that the “brethren of the Lord” were children born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus’ birth. Jerome first declined to comment on Helvidius’ remarks because they were a “novel, wicked, and a daring affront to the faith of the whole world”.¹³ This was an entirely new interpretation, one nobody had ventured before, and it was beneath contempt.

At length, however, Jerome’s friends convinced him to write a reply, which turned out to be his treatise called *On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary*. He used not only the scriptural arguments given above, but cited earlier Christian writers, such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr. Helvidius claimed the support of two writers, Tertullian and Victorinus, but Jerome showed this was no support at all, since Tertullian was a heretic (a Montanist) and the passage from Victorinus had been misinterpreted. Helvidius was unable to come up with a reply, and his theory was not employed again until modern times.

So, if it is established that the “brethren of the Lord” were not Jesus’ brothers german or half brothers, who were they? That they were Jesus’ cousins has been the accepted view at least from the time of Jerome until recent centuries. (Before Jerome the consensus was that they definitely were not Mary’s sons, but not necessarily that they were her nephews.)

Of the four “brethren” who are named in the Gospels, consider, for the sake of argument, only James. Similar reasoning can be used for the other three. We know that James’ mother was named Mary. Look at the descriptions of the women standing beneath the Cross: “Among them were

Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee” (Mt 27:56); “Among them were Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome” (Mk 15:40). Then look at what John says: “And meanwhile his (Jesus’) mother, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen had taken their stand beside the cross of Jesus” (Jn 19:25). If we compare these parallel accounts of the scene of the Crucifixion, we see that the mother of James and Joseph must be the wife of Cleophas. So far so good.

An argument against this, though, is that James is elsewhere (Mt 10:3) described as the son of Alphaeus, which would mean this Mary, whoever she was, was the wife of both Cleophas and Alphaeus. One solution is that she was widowed once, then remarried. More probably Alphaeus and Cleophas (Clopas in Greek) are the same person, since the Aramaic name for Alphaeus could be rendered in Greek in different ways, either as Alphaeus or Clopas. Another possibility is that Alphaeus took a Greek name similar to his Jewish name, the way that Saul took the name Paul.

So it is probable, anyway, that James is the son of this other Mary and Cleophas. If the testimony of Hegesippus, a second-century historian, is believed, Cleophas was the brother of Joseph, the foster father of Jesus.¹⁴ James would thus be Joseph’s nephew and a cousin of Jesus, who was Joseph’s putative son. This identification of the “brethren of the Lord” as Jesus’ cousins is open to legitimate question—they might even be relatives more distantly removed—and our inability to know certainly their status says nothing about the main point, which is that the Bible demonstrates that they were not, anyway, the Virgin Mary’s children.

Why are fundamentalists, particularly those most opposed to Catholicism, so insistent that Mary was not perpetually a virgin? There seem to be two reasons.

One is dislike of celibacy for priests and nuns. They are aware that it is Catholic teaching that celibacy is to be highly prized, that there is much virtue and much common sense in priests and nuns giving up the privilege of marriage in order to serve Christ better. They know Catholics refer to the example of Mary when praising consecrated virginity. So, by undermining her status, they hope to undermine that of priests and nuns. By claiming Mary did not live her life as a virgin, they hope to make religious celibacy seem contrary to the gospel.

The other reason concerns Mary herself. In the Catholic scheme of things,

she is certainly different from other women, so much so that she is considered worthy of special devotion (not of course of worship, *latria*, but of a level of honor, *hyperdulia*, higher than other saints receive). Her status accounts for the attention paid her. Fundamentalists think that what she gets, by way of devotion, is necessarily taken from Christ.

This is neither true nor logical, but they nevertheless think devotion to Mary must be discouraged if proper devotion to our Lord is to be maintained. One way to diminish her status is to show she was just like other women, more or less, and that can be done in part by showing she had other children. Their desire to do this tends to make impossible fundamentalists' accurate weighing of the facts. Their presuppositions do not allow them to see what the Bible really implies about the "brethren of the Lord".

Chapter 23

The Inquisition

Sooner or later, any exchange of views with fundamentalists will come around to the Inquisition. The topic can hardly be avoided. To non-Catholics the Inquisition is a scandal; to Catholics, an embarrassment; to both, a confusion. At the least, it is a handy stick with which to engage in Catholic-bashing, because most Catholics are at a loss for a sensible reply. The topic is so vast, its history so intricate, they do not know how to begin to respond to fundamentalists, even though few of the latter know the first thing about the Inquisition. What little they do know comes from tendentious little pamphlets written by people whose main interest is not historical accuracy.

The Inquisition was spread over six centuries and half a continent. It appeared first in southern France in response to Catharism and the civil discord that accompanied that religious and ideological plague, and later it was working, in fits and starts and in quite different formats, in Italy and the Holy Roman Empire, where it functioned for only a few decades in the thirteenth century. In between it was established in Spain, and there it became a creature of the state and was effectively out of the control of Church authorities.

Technically, five forms of the Inquisition may be distinguished. First came the episcopal, established in 1184 and operating mainly in France. Individual bishops ran the show, but not entirely well. Innocent III sought more control and established the legatine Inquisition, which was under the authority of the Cistercians. That was in 1198. Procedures were further formalized in 1231, when Gregory IX set up the monastic Inquisition, with the Dominicans in control. Commentators usually speak of these three forms as one institution, the Medieval Inquisition. It died out as Catharism disappeared.

Quite separate was the Roman Inquisition, begun in 1542 under Paul III. This was the one under which Galileo was tried, and it was the least active and most benign of the three main variations. Separate again was the Spanish Inquisition, begun in 1478, a state institution used to ferret out Jews and

Moors who converted to Christianity not out of conviction but for purposes of political or social advantage. It was the Spanish Inquisition that had the worst record.¹

Surprisingly enough, Loraine Boettner, the intellectual godfather of modern fundamentalist anti-Catholicism, has little to say about the Inquisition in his *Roman Catholicism*. One would think he would make more extensive use of the issue since it is such a fine weapon against the Church. He looks only at the Spanish Inquisition and then only briefly, relying mainly on an article appearing in *Christian Heritage* magazine in 1959. The author, Walter M. Montano, wrote that “it has been shown by [Juan Antonio] Llorente, who carefully examined the records of the Tribunal, and whose statements are drawn from the most authoritative sources, that 105,285 victims fell under the inquisitor general Torquemada; 51,167 under Cisneros; and 34,952 fell under Diego Perez. It is further reckoned that 31,912 were burned alive! Half that number, 15,659, suffered the punishment of the statute, and 291,450 were sent to penitentiaries. Half a million families were destroyed by the Inquisition, and it cost Spain two million children!”²

This quotation illustrates the reliability of sources used by fundamentalists such as Boettner, who does not inform the reader that Llorente, who had been appointed a secretary to the Inquisition in 1789, was hardly a responsible historian. In 1801 he was dismissed for alleged embezzlement. Although a Spaniard, he sided with the French when they invaded Spain in 1808. After the return of the Spanish king, Llorente retired to Paris, where in 1817 he published *The Critical History of the Spanish Inquisition*. He claimed to make use of official documents to which he said he had access, and it was from these documents he calculated the number of executions. When challenged on the figures, he said he had burned the papers on which he had relied.³ Critics have asked whether one can trust a man who says he destroyed original documents deliberately.

In any event, there is considerable dispute, even among honest historians, regarding how many deaths occurred under the Spanish Inquisition, and this is no place to settle that squabble. It is enough to note that responsible estimates vary, some historians asserting fewer than three thousand death sentences were handed down during three centuries, others putting the figure higher. As a point of comparison, Sir James Stephens, in his *History of English Criminal Law*, notes there were eight hundred executions a year during the early post-Reformation period in England, where the Inquisition

never operated.⁴ One could also refer to the burning of alleged witches, a practice almost unknown in Catholic countries. (Goethe, in his *Italienische Reise*, attributed the lack of belief in witches to Catholics' use of the confessional.)⁵ In Britain thirty thousand went to the stake for witchcraft; in Protestant Germany the figure was one hundred thousand.⁶ Such statistics do not make the Spanish executions right, but they perhaps indicate that severity in punishment was not due to Catholicism as such, but must be attributed to the general character of the times.

Most fundamentalists who write about the Inquisition rely on the books of Henry C. Lea (1825—1909), who published a massive three-volume account. His *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*⁷ was called, in a priest's introduction to the French edition, "the most thorough history of the Inquisition which we possess". Remarkably enough, it is probably *still* the most thorough (at sixteen hundred pages, certainly the longest) history in English, for there have been few scholars willing to grapple with the all-encompassing historical analysis the institution demands.

It is unfortunate that it has been Lea's work that has molded public opinion in English-speaking countries, because, although it contains a great amount of data, it is marred by an unrelenting bias. "Honest he may be," said Elphege Vacandard, himself an authority on the Inquisition, "but impartial never. His pen too often gives way to his prejudices and his hatred of the Catholic Church. His critical judgment is sometimes gravely at fault."⁸ But his faults are virtues in the eyes of fundamentalists.

Lea was an American. His counterpart in England was Cambridge historian G. G. Coulton (1858—1947), an ardent foe of the Catholic Church and well known for his love of controversy. When the subject was Rome, the Cambridge don had difficulty containing himself. He might be known best for an exchange of letters he had with Arnold Lunn, the letters appearing as *Is the Catholic Church Anti-Social?* Lunn scolded Coulton for eating up an entire third of the book with a single letter that largely strayed from the agreed topic and focused instead on his pet anti-Catholic attacks.⁹ Coulton, too, is a favorite of literate fundamentalists.

Considering himself the English Lea, Coulton took pains to protect his mentor's reputation. Herbert Thurston, an English Jesuit who remarked that Lea's "work abounded in reckless deductions from inadequate evidence", said one could find ten palpable blunders on any ten consecutive pages of

Lea's books,¹⁰ Coulton, incensed, challenged him to prove it, had an associate select ten pages from Lea at random, and, in an act of magnanimity, threw in two pages extra. To his consternation Thurston pointed out fifteen blunders in the twelve pages. Coulton acknowledged to Lunn that Lea "had stumbled badly" and admitted his own "mistaken credulity".¹¹

One cannot conclude from this anecdote that all Lea and Coulton wrote about the Inquisition was wrong. They made real progress in basic research. Proper credit should not be denied them. The problem is that they could not weigh the facts properly because they were burdened with fierce animosity toward the Church—animosity that had nothing to do with the Inquisition as such. Their prejudices hindered them in separating reliable information from unreliable. They were too quick to accept statements unfavorable to the Church, too slow to dismiss statements inspired by malice similar to their own.

Of course, the contrary problem has not been unknown. Some Catholic writers, particularly those less interested in digging for truth than in giving a quick excuse, have glossed over incontrovertible facts and done what they could to whitewash the Inquisition, reminding one of hagiographers who reduce saints from human beings to porcelain dolls by ignoring awkward facts in their lives. This is as much a disservice to the truth as exaggerating the Inquisition's bad points. These well-intentioned but misguided Catholic apologists are, in one respect at least, much like Lea, Coulton, and the present strain of anti-Catholic fundamentalists. They fear, as the others hope, that the facts about the Inquisition will demonstrate the illegitimacy of the Catholic Church. But the facts will not do that at all. The Church has nothing to fear from the truth or a right appreciation of it. No account of foolishness, misguided zeal, or cruelty by Catholics can undo the divine foundation of the Church, although admittedly such things are stumbling blocks to Catholic and non-Catholic alike. What must be grasped is that the Church contains within itself all sorts of sinners and knaves, and some of them reach high rank. The wheat and chaff coexist in the Kingdom until the end, and that was how the Founder intended it.

The problem for fundamentalists is that they perceive the Church to contain only the elect. For them, sinners are outside the doors. Locate sinners, and one locates another place where the Church is not. It is easy to demonstrate sin operating through the Inquisition, at least to the extent dry records allow us to perceive sin at the remove of centuries, and for the

fundamentalist this proves the Inquisition, if it was the arm of a church, was the arm of a false church. Catholics, thinking fundamentalists might have a point, tend to be defensive. That is the wrong attitude. The right attitude for Catholics is to discover what really happened and to understand the Inquisition *in situ*—and then to explain to anti-Catholics, hard although this may be, why the sorry tale does not prove what they think it proves.

There can be no Catholic who would not wish that the Inquisition—or at least its bad elements, which were not coextensive with it—had never happened. In many respects, it was a logical consequence of the times and, for all its gore, not easily distinguishable from civil courts in its procedures and punishments, but the fact that cruelty can be found elsewhere in old records does not justify the cruelty that operated through the inquisitorial process.

How should a Catholic answer charges about the Inquisition? He should not attempt to deny the undeniable; history cannot be wished away. On the other hand, he should not, out of embarrassment, acquiesce in every fundamentalist slander. What he should try to do is give his questioner a little perspective. If he is able, the Catholic should learn enough about the Inquisition to give his opponent some sort of overview and to demonstrate that while much of what he knows about the Inquisition is true in quality, it is wrong in quantity. If understood, this may help the fundamentalist see that the mere existence of the Inquisition does not disprove the Church's credentials.

Many fundamentalists believe that more people died under the Inquisition than in any war or plague, but in this they rely on ridiculous “statistics” generated by one-upmanship among anti-Catholics, each of whom, it seems, tries to come up with the largest number of casualties. Trying to straighten out such historical confusions can take one only so far, of course, and one should not put undue emphasis on numbers. As Ronald Knox said, we should be cautious, “lest we should wander interminably in a wilderness of comparative atrocity statistics”.¹² In fact, no one knows how many people perished through the Inquisition. We happen to live in a century of statistics. Everything is quantified, and we save records the way squirrels save acorns, but often with far less reason. It is difficult for us to appreciate that in earlier centuries statistical abstracts were not drawn up because people saw no need for them. We do, indeed, have some records of how many people were executed, but they are spotty. No doubt most such records just disappeared

over the centuries, and there were probably few to begin with. We can make at best rough estimates of the number of deaths.

We can determine for certain, though, two things about the numbers given by most fundamentalists: they are exaggerated or, worse, fabrications. It would be one thing to err in extrapolations or calculations. An error of 100 or even 500 percent would not be large in piecing together what facts are available. But an error of 2.5 million percent? If you take the conservative figure that some Catholic scholars accept (around four thousand executions total, throughout the history of the Inquisition, in all countries where it operated), that is roughly the size of the error in the figure given in *The Mystery of Babylon Revealed*, a book that states that 95 million people were killed during the Inquisition.¹³

The figure of 95 million deaths is so grotesquely off that one immediately doubts the writer's sanity or at least his grasp of the elementary facts of demographics. Not until modern times did the population of the whole of Europe approach million.¹⁴ The Inquisition did not operate in England, Scandinavia, Northern Europe, or Eastern Europe. Although on paper its extent was wide, in practice it was confined almost entirely to southern France, Italy, Spain, and a few parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The Black Death, which killed about a third of Europe's population, is credited by historians with major changes in the social structure. The Inquisition is credited with few, precisely because the number of its victims was by comparison small.

Far better than wasting time arguing about statistics that can only be roughly approximated or about numbers taken out of a magician's hat, the Catholic should ask the fundamentalist what he thinks the existence of the Inquisition demonstrates. After all, no fundamentalist will bring up the subject unless he thinks it proves something about the Catholic Church. What is that something? That the Church contains sinners? Guilty as charged. That at times sinners have reached positions of authority? Ditto. That even otherwise good Catholics, afire with zeal, sometimes lose their balance? True, all true, but such charges could be made and verified even if the Inquisition never existed.

Fundamentalist writers claim the Inquisition reveals the Catholic Church could not be the Church founded by Christ. They use the Inquisition as a good—perhaps their best—bad example. Yet to call an institution into question is not to prove it false, and the Church has not been false to its

commission. Individual Catholics, yes—it has always been that way, since the denials of Peter, and it will continue that way until the end—but no degree of un-saintliness on the part of Catholics proves the Church to be other than what it claims to be, even though that unsaintliness puts grave obstacles in the path of people outside and inside the Church. As a practical matter, there is only so much mileage in the anti-Catholics' argument, and they recognize it; most people perceive at once its weakness, how it can apply equally against Reformation Christianity. If the Inquisition establishes the falsity of Catholicism, the witch trials establish the falsity of Protestantism.

Perhaps a more compelling, if often unstated, reason fundamentalists bring up the Inquisition is that they think it was begun to “liquidate” fundamentalists. They identify themselves with Catharists (also known as Albigensians), or perhaps it is better to say they identify Catharists with themselves. They think Catharists were twelfth-century fundamentalists and that the Catholic Church did to them just what it would do to fundamentalists today if it had the means. This is a fantasy. Fundamentalist writers take one point—that Catharists used a vernacular version of the Bible—and conclude that these people were “Bible Christians”. The truth is that they were hardly Christians at all. Theirs was a curious heresy that perhaps (no one knows for sure) came to France from what is now Bulgaria. Catharism was a mixture of Gnosticism, which claimed a secret source of religious knowledge, and Manichaeism, which said matter is evil, and it had serious, civilization-destroying, social consequences.

Marriage was scorned because it legitimized sexual relations, which Catharists identified as the original sin. Concubinage was permitted because it was temporary and secret and was not given formal approval, while marriage was permanent, open, and publicly sanctioned. The consequences from such theories are not hard to imagine.

There was one key sacrament, the *consolamentum*, which could be received only once and which was absolutely necessary for salvation. Any sin committed after receiving the *consolamentum* deprived one of heaven. The Catharist thus waited until he was on his deathbed to receive his “baptism”. What followed next, for those who did not die promptly of natural causes, was the *endura*, which was not readily distinguishable from euthanasia. If the Catharist wanted to die as a “martyr”, he was suffocated with a pillow. If he wanted to go out as a “confessor”, he was starved to death. Religious

authorities would reside in the home of the dying Catharist to ensure his family did not sneak food in.

There was also a political angle to the heresy. Feudal society was based on the oath of fealty, much as ours is based on contract. Catharists denied the lawfulness of oaths, and that threatened to undermine the social fabric; imagine what would happen today if all contractual obligations, no matter how old or well established, were suddenly eliminated. Catharists interpreted Christ's words to Peter concerning tribute money ("then the children are free"; Mt 17:25) as authorizing them to withhold taxes and to refuse allegiance to secular rulers. Catharism was both a moral and a political evil. Even Lea admitted "the cause of orthodoxy was the cause of progress and civilization. Had Catharism become dominant, or even had it been allowed to exist on equal terms, its influence could not have failed to become disastrous." Whatever else might be said about Catharism, it was certainly not the same as modern fundamentalism, and fundamentalists' sympathy with the heresy is sadly misplaced.

What is needed by all disputants is perspective. Catholics in particular, if they want to see a discussion of the Inquisition result in understanding rather than fisticuffs, need to appreciate what is really in question. At one time Catholic apologists tried to justify all aspects of the Inquisition. That was foolish. There has never been any need for a whitewash. Today many Catholics fail to understand what fundamentalists are driving at, and they restrict themselves to secondary matters. Instead, they should discover what fundamentalists are trying to prove with their talk about hecatombs.

Granted, there is a certain utility, but a decidedly limited one, in demonstrating that the kinds and degrees of punishments inflicted by the Inquisition were similar to or even lighter than those generally meted out by secular courts. It is equally true that, despite what we consider the Inquisition's lamentable procedures, many people preferred to have their cases tried by ecclesiastical courts because the secular courts had fewer safeguards; indeed, when the Inquisition was abolished in Spain, people rioted in favor of its return. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* remarks accurately that "it is well known that belief in the justice of punishing heresy with death was so common among the sixteenth-century reformers—Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and their adherents—that we may say their toleration began where their power ended".¹⁵ Jean Guitton has noted that "we must measure the horror of the remedy by the horror of the disease".¹⁶ And, as some have

pointed out, we should keep in mind that as recently as fifty years ago, torture (“the third degree”) was routinely used even by American police. Such arguments are better suited to discussions with reasonably informed people than with fundamentalists who think they can injure Catholicism by talking about judicial practices that are universally acknowledged, now, to be unjust. “The Inquisition was punctilious in its adherence to law,” wrote Donald Attwater, “but after full allowance has been made for ‘other times, other manners’, some of its procedure[s] and punishments must be set down as utterly unreasonable and in consequence cruel.”¹⁷ One should not seek to justify them, but to explain them and, most importantly, to explain how they could have been associated with a divinely established Church and how, from their existence, it is not proper to conclude that the Church of Rome is not the Church of Christ. This is where any discussion should focus.

Chapter 24

Practical Apologetics

Almost everyone has been through it. There is a knock at the door, usually at some inconvenient hour, and outside is a man with a wide smile, an open Bible, and awkward questions, beginning with, “Have you been saved, friend?” When he discovers you are a Catholic, which you volunteer in hope it will frighten him away, he reaches into his valise and brings out several Catholic Bibles. “Which would you prefer we use—New American Bible, Jerusalem Bible, maybe the old Douay-Rheims?” You talk with him for what seems like hours, and finally he goes away with an air of triumph, while you retire with a sore throat.

Or the altercation—somehow it always ends up being an altercation—starts after Mass. You exit church to find people distributing leaflets opposing Catholic beliefs. If you so much as look one of them in the eye, he rushes over, and you cannot wriggle your way through the crowd fast enough to get away. “Here’s the truth about the idolatry of the Mass”, you are told in an insistent voice as a tract is pressed into your hands. “Read it.”

“No, thanks; not interested”, you say, so he tells you, word for word, just what you would have read and keeps backing you toward the curb until you engage him in talk or step into whizzing traffic. You try being brusque, but even that does not discourage him.

Perhaps it starts in a social setting. At your prolife meeting, once the business session is over and everyone settles back for a little conviviality and a spot of tea, fundamentalists search out the Catholics. You sit in the corner, trying to be unobtrusive, but one sidles up to you anyway and, before you can ask her opinion about the first nonreligious topic that comes to mind, she leans over and asks, “Wouldn’t you like to have an absolute assurance of salvation?”

“Sure,” you say, “but. . .” You are interrupted as she motions you to wait while she flips heavily underlined pages of the New Testament to find just the right rebuttal to the comment you had no chance to make, and from there

it is a long evening and all downhill.

These discussions, whether with the fellow at your door, the pamphleteer outside church, or the woman at the meeting, seem to go nowhere. You know things are being taken out of context, but you do not remember what the context is. There are snappy rejoinders edging toward the tip of your tongue, but they fail to pass through your teeth. (Later you will kick yourself for not being quick-witted.) If you put Catholic beliefs into your own, unconsidered words, you find instead you have put your foot in your mouth and confirmed your adversary's worst suspicions. For some questions you do not have the vaguest hint of an answer; in fact, you have the nagging suspicion that maybe, just maybe, your opponent is on to something, God forbid.

You end up dissatisfied, and no one—least of all you—seems at all convinced by what you have said. Quite the contrary. Your interlocutor appears more set in anti-Catholic prejudices than ever, and people around you, if there are any left by the time you are through, seem to be muttering under their breath, presumably about your descent from Caspar Milquetoast. You did not handle the situation well, and you know it.

If there is a moral to this, it is that knowing *how* to argue is just as important as knowing *what* to argue. If you have no appreciation of technique, all the knowledge in the world will not help since you will not be able to pass it along. You can be a walking theological treatise (which, Lord knows, you are not), but if you antagonize opponents or talk past them, you have wasted your time and theirs. It is not enough to be a good conversationalist. That will not make up for doctrinal or historical ignorance. Style without substance is worthless. To be an effective apologist, you must marry delivery and content.

In the earlier chapters of this book you learned about the anti-Catholic movement among fundamentalists, its origins, its arguments, and what can be said to counter its charges. In the next chapter you will learn what to read to deepen your understanding of Catholicism and fundamentalism. That done, you naturally will want to know how to put your newfound knowledge to work. You will begin by recalling the motto of the Benedictine monks, *ora et labora*. You will begin your apologetics work with prayer. You will accomplish nothing—not merely a little, mind you, but nothing at all—without a serious prayer life. Even good works, such as “instructing the ignorant”, will go nowhere unless you put everything into God's hands—and not just at the outset, but daily, in your studies, in your discussions, in your

frustrations. Yes, especially in your frustrations, which will be many because your successes will seem so meager, so few. They will be there, but many of them you will never see. Fundamentalists did not become what they are overnight, particularly those who converted from Catholicism, and most of them, even if they ultimately find rest at Rome, will not move toward the Church with any speed you can detect. In most cases you plant a seed and let it germinate on its own. If a few people ask for more assistance, you give it, but for every fundamentalist whose opinion of the Church seems to be mellowing, there will be ten who seem as firmly anti-Catholic as ever. You have to let grace take its course.

How should you pray for this kind of apostolate? One way that makes sense is to meditate on scriptural passages. Why? Because it does double duty. It is at once prayer and work, the work being the inescapable reading you must do in the Bible. No matter how fine your religious training, no matter how well you think you know doctrines or Church history, you need to be at home with Scripture if you intend to make an impression on fundamentalists. Of course, you should be conversant with the Bible anyway, not solely in preparation for controversy, but for its own sake—for *your* own sake.

If the only thing that gets you to open the Bible is umbrage at the latest anti-Catholic slander, that will do for starters. You might say it is like contrition versus attrition. Perfect contrition, sorrow arising out of love of God, is the ideal in confession, but you will have your sins forgiven if the best you can manage is attrition, fear of punishment. Reading the Bible because it is the word of God is better than reading it because you need to find replies to fundamentalists' accusations—but any port in a storm. The important thing is to start reading; once you do, it will be easy to make a habit of turning to the sacred text.

Concentrate on the New Testament, but not to the exclusion of the Old. It is more important to go through the New Testament a dozen times than to go through the Old twice. There is no need to memorize great chunks of the Bible, the way some fundamentalists do. You should be especially familiar, though, with the Gospels. If you are not at ease with the details of Christ's life, you are in trouble. Frank Sheed, the great street-corner apologist, put it this way: "A Catholic apologist who is not soaked in the Gospels is an anomaly in himself, and his work is doomed to aridity."¹

The New Testament is short enough to be read in the evenings of a single

week. Spend several weeks with it before doing anything else, paying particular attention to the Gospels, but not ignoring the Epistles. Work in the Old Testament gradually. Not all of the Old Testament is needed for your work, so do not worry if you take a year or two to get to parts of it, but do make an effort to read the historical and the major prophetic books as soon as possible. You should not, of course, read the Bible to the exclusion of other works because, if you do, you will end up lacking perspective, like many fundamentalists. Still, the Bible has to be the ground of your other reading.

But which Bible? It does little good to purchase the “best” version, whichever that may be objectively, if you will not read it. You are not interested in an ornament for the coffee table, but in a book you can pick up as comfortably as your favorite novel. The best version for you will be the version you will read. If the one you choose is what most people regard as an inferior edition, you can graduate to a superior one later. The first thing is to get in the habit of Bible reading. Once you do, it will be easy to take up a superior translation.

It might be wise to purchase several translations even if you know which you will use for your regular reading. The reason? To compare renderings. If you know no Greek, Hebrew, or Latin, the best way to get a feel for the meaning of a verse is to see how different translations phrase it. Particularly useful will be a cheap copy of the King James Version of the New Testament. Most fundamentalists use that translation—some not even knowing it *is* a translation but believing it is the original—and discussions are often made easier if their wording can be compared with yours, particularly since a number of their confusions arise from misunderstanding seventeenth-century diction.

You have heard the adage that “the exception proves the rule”. Of course, the exception *disproves* the rule, if you think about it, but that is using prove in the modern sense of substantiate. When the adage was not an adage but a current idiom, the word prove (coming from the Latin *probare*, from which we get our word probate) did not mean substantiate, but test. An exception was said to test, to bend, even to snap a rule, and in that sense the saying is quite true. When prove is used in the modern sense, the saying is flat-out wrong. It is this kind of confusion that afflicts some fundamentalists who insist on using the King James Version. They use twentieth-century instead of seventeenth-century definitions, and that puts them on the wrong track.

This can be demonstrated if you show them one or more modern translations alongside the King James.

Familiarize yourself with anti-Catholic literature. See what topics are emphasized: the Bible as the sole rule of faith, justification by faith alone, the “idolatry of the Mass”, “worship” of Mary and the saints, “Catholic inventions”, and much more. See how the arguments, weak as they are, are handled. You will perceive at once, if you have not already noticed, that anti-Catholic materials are skewed, but if you cannot think of complete and ready rejoinders, make notes and study up. It will hardly do to say, “I can’t remember why that’s wrong, but it is, and you’ll just have to take my word for it.” The Appendix gives addresses of some of the anti-Catholic organizations mentioned in this book; write for samples of their literature. Once you have understood their arguments and have learned more about your own faith, you will be ready to engage in friendly arguments.

There are two preliminary points to keep in mind when arguing with fundamentalists. The first is that there is nothing wrong, in itself, with arguing. Some people have the mistaken notion that all argumentation is uncharitable, but that tells more about their own arguing skills, or lack of them, than anything else. After all, people who find their own arguments resulting in fisticuffs do not really know how to argue and cannot be expected to think arguments can be profitable. The second point is that most fundamentalists welcome a good argument; they want to be challenged, and they want to see if their position “works”. Many of them have been trained to argue with Catholics whom they seek to evangelize, though, to be sure, they do not expect Catholics to argue back.

You will discover that most fundamentalists have a surprisingly limited repertoire of accusations. (Do not confuse them with the professional anti-Catholics, whose accusations are seemingly endless, which is to be expected of people who make their livings attacking Rome.) Most fundamentalists, even those trained for small-scale anti-Catholic work, have done far less reading in Catholicism than you already have done in fundamentalism, if you have read the previous chapters. They are told Catholics not only know nothing about the Bible, but little about their own Faith, so they expect to accost people who are pushovers. It is disturbing enough to them to find Catholics answering their questions instead of standing openmouthed; it is worse to be put on the defensive and to be forced to answer pointed questions about fundamentalism. This few of them are trained to do, and in short order

they take refuge in the plea that they need to check with their pastors. Do not gloat when you see them forced to make a strategic retreat. You soon might be “advancing toward the rear” yourself.

When arguing, do not argue to win. You can “win” yet drive people further from the Church. Argue to explain. Your task is to show fundamentalists the Catholic position from the inside, not to make cheap debater’s points. You must scrupulously avoid striving for quick victories with which to impress onlookers, and you must realize that each time you sink to the *ad hominem*, you alienate another listener and the Church loses another present or prospective member. People who interpret “argument” to mean raised voices, large gesticulations, and cutting remarks are not suited to apologetics. All these are out. The skills of a good apologist are not the same as the skills of a good orator or a good debater, much less of a second-class orator or debater. Instead, strive for the skills of a good missionary, because that is what an apologist is.

This work is not for people with thin skins or short fuses. Losing your temper, or being thrown off balance by someone who loses his, means you have lost an opportunity for clearing away mental cobwebs. If you take offense at being called pagan or blasphemous or stupid when explaining Catholic doctrines, if you flaunt your annoyance and cannot help shaking your head when confronted with unthinking comments, find some other way to occupy your spare time.

If you stick with apologetics, you will discover soon enough the lure of verbal combat, which, although an unbloody warfare, can leave wounds every bit as lethal as those inflicted with regular munitions. It must be done right or not at all. Remember, you are not opposing fundamentalism so much as explaining Catholicism; your work is essentially positive and constructive, not negative and destructive. To the extent you do oppose fundamentalism (after all, error should be countered, even when mixed with truth), make sure you oppose fundamentalism and not fundamentalists.

Not everyone opposing the Catholic religion is a loon or is working in bad faith, and, if you cannot appreciate that, you will do more harm than good. Few fundamentalists, even those who are actively anti-Catholic, do what they do out of spite. They are working with clear consciences, but they have been misinformed. Perhaps they should have done more homework, but the fault is not entirely theirs. They trust the sources they have had, but now they should be *shown there is* more to consider. You will not get them to open their

minds by encouraging them to close their hearts. Hatred directed against the Church cannot be offset by hatred on behalf of the Church. You must approach fundamentalists in charity.

When you do enter discussions, avoid verse-slinging. It accomplishes little. A barrage of biblical citations overwhelms only those ignorant of the Bible. The first time fundamentalists cornered you with verses that were unfamiliar, you did not know what to say. You had not even heard some of the lines before, and the rest, in an odd translation, sounded not quite right. True, you were unconvinced by this tactic, but you *were* thrown for a loop. Later, you did your homework and learned there was nothing to fear. The verses, if read in context, really supported the Catholic Faith, just as this way of arguing no longer impresses you, if it ever did, it does not impress fundamentalists who find Catholics using it in return. They already have a fixed interpretation of each line of the Bible, and their interpretations cannot be overcome by your quoting the text and stopping there. Mere quotation is not enough. You have to go step by step, explaining what each verse means, but before you do that, you have to give an overview of the subject under discussion. Tossing quotations left and right is a waste of time.

Do not go to the other extreme and fail to use biblical citations. They are absolutely necessary if you want to make your points effectively. What is to be avoided is the carefree tossing around of verses that only seem to be related, usually because they have a word in common. For example, to refute the Catholic notion that “rock” in Matthew 16:18 refers to Peter, fundamentalists list as many verses as they can find in which “rock” refers to God. They do not bother to look at Matthew 16:18 in itself, and they forget that the whole point of the verse is precisely that Peter was being given a title usually reserved to God—and what did *that* signify?

Your goal is to reorient your listeners, giving them a new perspective. Remember, they think they take their beliefs straight from the Bible. In fact, the Bible is used to substantiate already-held beliefs. They begin with their own “tradition”, which is generally their pastor’s interpretation of the Bible. For many fundamentalists, their pastor is their pope. They accept his every word. When confronted with hard questions, they do not turn to the Bible to discover the answers; they say instead, “Let us ask our pastor.” What is more, their faith is largely colored by the church they attend. Some denominations emphasize one aspect of belief; others emphasize others. The assurance of salvation is the subject of the majority of sermons at some churches, the

Second Coming at others, and baptism by immersion at still others. Congregants will be especially familiar with scriptural passages relating to their pastor's favorite doctrines, will be less familiar with passages relating to other fundamentalist doctrines, and might be quite unfamiliar with the rest of the Bible.

You must enter discussions with a plan. Know what the main points should be, and then stick with them. All anti-Catholics concentrate on a few scriptural passages that seem damaging to Catholicism. Take the initiative. Address their points, but do not allow them to ask all the questions. Ask your own. You of course must know how to respond to their standard charges, but be prepared to bring up issues they conveniently skip. Put them on the spot and point out the weaknesses of fundamentalism. Do this not to demonstrate how smart you were for choosing the Catholic Church, but to emphasize that although much of what they hold is true, some is not, and for the fullness of truth they need to look to Rome.

One of the most annoying things in getting into a conversation with evangelistic fundamentalists (that is not redundant: not all of them are evangelistic) is that you do not seem to get a word in edgewise. You do not seem to be able to steer the conversation your way. The less well versed you are in Catholicism, the worse the problem. The discussion may start with the most common question, "Are you saved?" Or it may start with any of several standard openings. It seems as though you hardly start to form a reply when more questions are thrown at you, each leading you further into uncharted areas. You feel adrift, unable to turn to a topic on which you have done your homework. By the time your interlocutor decamps, you feel stymied, having given no good answers and having posed no good questions.

You need to learn a few techniques for taking charge. Here is one, and it is simple: sidestep the first question and pose your own, so you can turn the conversation to your favorite topic. It is not at all rude to do this; you are under no obligation to let yourself be led around by the nose. Until you are at ease with all the major issues, so that you can handle any likely opening by fundamentalists, you may *have* to do this if you want to get anywhere in your apologetics work.

The way to do it is to use Jesus' ploy (though of course he did not do this for the reasons you would), Recall how he responded when the chief priests and elders approached him and asked, "What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?" Jesus said, "I will ask you a

question, just one; if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting like this” (Mt 21:23-24). He took charge of the discussion by bringing up the point he wanted to discuss, by setting aside his questioners’ topic.

Do the same kind of thing yourself. Let us assume you are asked, “Where does the Bible mention purgatory?” And let us assume you are not up to discussing purgatory, having not done your homework, but are up to discussing the notion of *sola scriptura*. You can use this approach: “I’d be happy to talk about that if we can first talk about why you think the Bible is the sole rule of faith. After all, your question implies we should look to the Bible alone. I want you to substantiate your belief, since, so far as I understand it, the Bible nowhere says it is the sole rule of faith.” Then take it from there. Follow up with more questions. You may or may not get back to purgatory—if you do, you will just have to wing it—but you will steer the conversation (mainly) to topics on which you are prepared.

Now of course this is an expedient, not an ideal. In point of fact you should be able to explain purgatory, but you have to operate based on how things are, not on how they ought to be. You cannot become a theological whiz overnight. You can discuss only what you know, and, until you can handle most topics with facility, you will have to be able to turn conversations to topics with which you are at ease. It would be nice to wait until you had every issue, major and minor, down pat, but are you going to want to start engaging in apologetics as a nonagenarian? Work with what you have, and learn what more you can, but do not keep the bench warm waiting for a revelation.

Keep in mind that your fundamentalist opponents are not really any more knowledgeable than you are today—quite possibly less. They seem more knowledgeable because they pose the first question and usually steer the conversation, yet they can get flustered easily. Their success, like the aura of invincibility they exude, depends entirely on your ignorance. As likely as not, they would not know what to say if you made intelligent responses or posed tough questions of your own. They have been trained much like the newspaper boy who comes to the door with a memorized patter. You have seen it often enough. If the boy recalls his lines, and if you keep your mouth shut, everything goes well, and he might have a new subscriber. If you ask him anything about the paper other than the price, he does not know what to say. His delivery depends on your allowing him to stick with his canned talk.

It is the same with most fundamentalists. They undergo a short course in “soul winning” and are trained to recite a fixed patter on the assumption that people they talk to, including virtually all Catholics, do not know enough about Christianity to ask tough questions of their own. The fundamentalists’ instructors are mostly right in training them this way. The technique works well, which is why it is used. They expect to have doors slammed in their faces, but they do not expect to be talked back to—at least not intelligently. When you throw out a question of your own and take charge of the conversation, as often as not they do not know what to say. They have been told how to go about “soul winning”, but they receive little training in being on the defensive. Why prepare for the statistically improbable? By taking charge of the discussion, you not only keep yourself from getting frustrated, you get to evangelize the evangelist. The discussion over, retire to your study and bone up on one of the topics you are still unsure about.

By the way, never be afraid to acknowledge ignorance. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. You will survive, and so will your ego. The answers you give on other points will be taken more seriously if people you speak with see you are not trying to bluster your way through a conversation. There is nothing easier to spot than a fake.

You must be absolutely honest. Never pretend doctrines or facts are other than they really are. Do not avoid the hard cases, but do not pander to your listeners either. Never succumb to the temptation to tell them what they want to hear or, more commonly, not to tell them what they do not want to hear. Christ informed the people of his day that there would be many things difficult to accept in his teaching. Acceptance has gotten no easier. Whether doctrinal or moral, there is no need to try to make hard truths palatable. Just state them as they are, but first know what they are. Admit your ignorance (to yourself at least), then do your homework. An embarrassment today can result in fuller understanding—and better apologetics—tomorrow.

Early on, discuss the history of the Bible. You need to make plain it was the Church that formed the Bible, not the Bible that formed the Church. Note, too, that the New Testament was not designed as a catechism. Its various parts were written to people who already were Christians, so it could not have been intended as the sole source of religious teaching. In the beginning, teaching was oral and was under the authority of the Church, which eventually decided what books belonged to the Bible and what did not.

Fundamentalists say, “Let us start by admitting that the Bible is the sole

rule of faith.” Translation: “Let us admit the Church has no authoritative role; all answers to religious questions are to be found on the face of Scripture only.” Do not agree to it. It just begs the question, and it is untrue. As a counter, ask your opponents to try to prove that the Bible was intended to be the sole rule of faith. The Bible itself makes no such claim (it calls itself “profitable” for salvation, not the sole rule of faith), but you have to know which verses to cite to prove that.

Fundamentalists also say that if a doctrine is not clearly in the Bible, it is not a doctrine to be held by Christians. This ignores what the Bible really is and what it is not. As Frank Sheed put it in one of his last books, *Death into Life*, “The Gospels give a selection of what Christ did and said, with each writer choosing the elements needed for the portrait he was drawing. The Epistles were for the most part written as the occasion arose—some point of doctrine was being misinterpreted, perhaps. Thus one cannot argue from the silence of the New Testament that any particular doctrine was not being taught. Purgatory for instance!”²

No matter how well they have memorized it, fundamentalists know little other than the Bible, which they know only selectively. They know little Church history, little formal theology. They may never have seen a catechism. You must provide the larger picture. If the topic is an interpretation of a scriptural passage, go to a good commentary and study up, but also go straight to the Fathers of the Church to learn what they wrote about the subject and to books dealing with the history of doctrines and Catholic customs. Appeals to early Christian writers are often useful. Explain to your listeners that finding out what the first Christians understood the apostles to teach is crucial. Make them see it is unlikely that people who were writing when the Church was young and memories of Christ were vivid would erroneously report what beliefs the early Church started with or how it interpreted Scripture. If early Christian writers took it for granted that a sacrificial priesthood was established by Christ (which they did), that fact is a powerful argument in support of the priesthood. If writers living a few generations after Christ mentioned the Real Presence (which they did), that argues in favor of the Catholic interpretation of John 6. Try to show a doctrine in relation to other doctrines, a custom in relation to other customs, New Testament times in relation to the immediately following centuries. It is important for fundamentalists to see the Church and Church history as a totality. You will have to show them how everything fits together.

Ecclesiastical history is a messy discipline. It is not nearly as well formed as dogmatic or moral theology. Even if you never are inclined to misrepresent teachings of the Church, you might be tempted to put an unwarrantedly good face on some event or person in its history. There is a tendency to want every Catholic to look good in everything he does, to have him make the right decisions at all times, as though he had been blessed with preternatural prescience. Conversely, there is a temptation to think someone outside the Church is always working in bad faith.

It is a mistake to paint historical characters in white and black only, each Catholic being angelic, each Protestant devilish. If you approach history that way, you either will make no progress in understanding it, or your first impressions soon will be discarded as you discover the humanity of the people behind the events. We begin our reading or writing, naturally enough, with certain predispositions, but these need to be refined as we progress—or we are not progressing at all.

In the preface to his masterwork, *Enthusiasm*, Ronald Knox noted he had been writing the book “for thirty years and a little more; no year has passed but I have added to it, patched it, rewritten it, in the time that could be spared from other occupations”. It did not turn out as he first thought it would.

To be sure, when the plan of the Book was first conceived, all those years ago, it was to have been a broadside, a trumpet-blast, an end of controversy. . . . [H]ere, I would say, is what happens inevitably, if once the principle of Catholic unity is lost! All this confusion, this priggishness, this pedantry, this eccentricity and worse, follows directly from the rash step that takes you outside the fold of Peter! All my historical figures, Wesley himself included, were to be a kind of rogues’ gallery, an awful warning against illuminism. But somehow, in the writing, my whole treatment of the subject became different; the more you got to know the men, the more human did they become, for better or worse.³

In a way, Knox ended up admiring John Wesley, “a man so far in reaction from the tendencies of his age that he seems a living commentary on them, yet so much a child of his age that you cannot think of him fitting in with any other”.⁴ Knox could write about the plain’ goodness of the man and still remark that his message and that of his followers “was simple only in so far as they left nine-tenths of Christian doctrine out of consideration, and concentrated on the remaining tenth—soteriology”,⁵ a comment that applies perfectly to today’s fundamentalists, in so many ways the heirs of Wesley, although they may not realize it. To be sure, no modern fundamentalists, overtly anti-Catholic or otherwise, can be put on Wesley’s plane, but the

point Knox was making applies to them still: these are, in the main, good people, and grace has not passed them by.

Just as you should not presume the worst on the part of Protestants, do not get into the habit of swallowing everything said or done by Catholics. It may astonish some to learn that on occasion individual Catholics have been wrong, their Protestant opponents right—the Catholics having missed the truly Catholic position on an issue, the Protestants having stumbled across it. What is more, the number of canonized saints is small, and with good reason. Even with all the spiritual wellsprings found in the Church, many of its members fare poorly, at least in comparison to their hopes and everyone else's expectations. We are consistently off the mark—but we would be lost entirely if it were not for the Church.

When talk turns to awkward points of Church history, do not misrepresent them. Do not hide blemishes. There is no need to. Put things in context, and remind your listeners that the Kingdom of God (a term that, in the Bible, usually refers to the Church rather than heaven) contains wheat and chaff, saints and sinners. But be careful how you phrase rebuttals. Here is a cautionary example.

Fundamentalists with a little knowledge of the papacy will inquire about the “bad Popes”. A few decades ago, among Catholic apologists it was considered clever to answer in this vein: “Yes, there have been some ‘bad Popes’, perhaps six or seven men being truly unworthy of the office. Given the large number of Popes, this is a proportion of about one in forty. On the other hand, one in twelve of the men Christ himself chose turned out bad.” True, but not convincing by itself. No, you have to approach the problem in a different way. Mere cleverness will not do.

Sarcasm will not do either. Sarcasm always backfires. Avoid it even when your opponents stoop to it. When they do, their consciences will annoy them later; if their consciences are dormant, things will eventually catch up with them anyway. Do not allow them to justify their rudeness by exchanging wisecrack for wisecrack. Keep clear of name-calling. If you see a fundamentalist thumping a Bible (and some do so, quite literally), do not refer to him as a Bible thumper, even if he sneeringly calls you a papist or Romanist or something worse. Allow him the title of Christian, even if he will not return the favor.

Granted, at times the temptation to give as one has received will be overpowering; make a resolution not to repeat the offense, then continue with

your work. Ignoring rudeness is usually easier to accomplish when it comes to you in a letter rather than straight to your face. A letter you can put aside until your temper cools, but an oral insult seems to call for an instant and thus unreflecting response. Make a real effort to keep your tongue in check.

To argue effectively, you not only will have to control your temper; you also will have to know what fundamentalists mean by particular terms. You can waste much time by discussing two different things while using the same terminology. Consider faith. For Catholics, faith is the acceptance of revealed truths, doctrines, on God's word alone. This is called theological or confessional faith. For fundamentalists, faith is trust in Christ's promises, not belief in a set of dogmas. This is called fiducial faith. Tradition is another confusing term. In the New Testament are injunctions not to adhere to the "traditions of men". When fundamentalists hear Catholics say the twin sources of revealed truth are Scripture and Tradition, they equate Tradition with "traditions of men", and they conclude the Catholic Church is contradicting the Bible directly. Terms you might think can be taken only univocally, such as inspiration and heaven, can mean something quite different to fundamentalists.

Avoid technical words unless a thorough grounding has been laid. Even Catholics misunderstand what is meant by transubstantiation, Immaculate Conception, and hypostatic union. On the other hand, do not be monosyllabic. To oversimplify is to sidestep fine points, which is equally bad. Do not presume a question means what it seems to mean. Find out what your inquirers really are talking about. Take time. If the question refers to the Virgin Birth, make sure they do not mean the birth of the Virgin. Take up a single topic at a time; look at it leisurely, from several angles, and never presume fundamentalists know what you mean by apparently simple terms such as soul, revelation, Mass. If they did, they would not have such odd ideas of what the Church stands for. You have to speak with them the way you would speak with uninstructed Catholics.

Keep your expectations modest. Do not expect conversions, because they are not overnight things. Count yourself successful if your opponents leave with the feeling that there is a sensible, even if not acceptable, Catholic response to each of their charges. It would be a great triumph just to have an active anti-Catholic withdraw from the fray and mull things over. You have to give things time.

After all, no one is born anti-Catholic. There are not even any "cradle anti-

Catholics” to parallel “cradle Catholics”. Often the most vituperative foes of the Church, both within and without fundamentalism, are former Catholics who left the Church as adults. Their leaving was a slow process of unperceived difficulties turning into doubts, of doubts turning into denials, of denials turning into affirmations of new doctrines. To expect a sudden reconversion is to ignore human nature.

Fundamentalists think Catholics have no answers at all to the usual charges and believe a few snappy questions are all it takes to transfix a Catholic, to leave him dumbfounded, groping helplessly for answers that are not there. They forget that while their “born-again” experience may have been of a moment’s duration, it came only after a long leave-taking of the Catholic religion. They did not fall away from their old Faith in an instant, as though struck down on the Damascus Road.

Similarly, their return, if there is to be one, will not be quick. It will take months, even years, before they begin to see the Church as it really is and begin to shed their prejudices, each prejudice acquired with difficulty and let go with even more. So, if an active anti-Catholic sits things out for a while, that is as much as can be expected. If he at length gets a few things straight about Catholicism, there likely will follow an avalanche of understanding. Perhaps he will come all the way home, either with your help or on his own, or he may remain a fundamentalist while ceasing to be an anti-Catholic. Although you would wish more for him personally, defusing an agent of anti-Catholic bigotry would be a success in itself, because that would mean fewer Catholics would be enticed out of the Church before they could be authentically catechized (or recatechized, as the case may be) and fewer fundamentalists would have their prejudices reinforced.

From the beginning you must make those outside see what the Church’s positions really *are*. Do not start by justifying Catholic doctrines through apposite Bible passages or appeals to syllogistic reasoning. Those can be effective techniques, and at some point they will be necessary, but at the very beginning they invite digressions. First you need to show your listeners what the Church really teaches. They almost always will have preconceived and quite wrong notions.

Your first task, then, and often your hardest, is to get terminology straight and to be able to explain, in your own words, what Catholics hold. Only once the doctrines are understood in themselves should you turn to their justifications, but showing what doctrines mean is the principal task you

have. Until you do that, you cannot move forward. Once you have the definitions clear, fundamentalists, like other non-Catholics who have gone through similar instruction, will want to learn more because they will have been introduced to something fresh, something whole, something fulfilling. They will have glimpsed the unity of Christianity for the first time.

Chapter 25

Food for the Mind

The prospective apologist needs thorough preparation, both in answering specific questions and in preparing a stronger general foundation for his own faith. The books discussed in this chapter will transform an average Catholic whose gut feelings are right into one who not only knows the answers to the questions that used to stump him, but now can pass on his newfound learning in away that others, far more confused than he ever was, can understand. These books are not the only ones worthy of study, of course, but they have proved particularly useful in the specialized task of dealing with fundamentalist attacks on the Catholic religion.¹

In what order these books will be read will depend largely on one's predispositions. Some can be taken up and put down at leisure; reading in snatches is quite sufficient. Others need to be read in a more sustained fashion—not in one evening necessarily, assuming that is even possible for people not afflicted with insomnia, but over a short period of time. One needs to set aside time daily so the first chapter is not forgotten by the time the last is reached. Just as the story line can be lost if one puts down a novel for any length of time, so the overall picture some of these books were designed to give will not be apprehended if one dallies in reading them.

Some of the material will have to be gone over more than once—you will want to read some things several times, just for your own enjoyment—and even then, after all this work, you will still need access to other, more detailed works, such as the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (the preferred 1914 edition, available through Catholic used-book dealers) or the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967 edition, inferior in coverage but adequate).

The Catholic unsure of his intellectual stamina should not be scared off. He does not have to try to devour the whole pie. Much good can be done, both for oneself and for non-Catholics, by getting the basics, by reading only the key works. (Anyone who would read the whole of an encyclopedia is an indiscriminating pedant and would never make it as an apologist!)²

Keep in mind that it is not enough to have absorbed general overviews of Catholicism, however good they might be. That will not prepare you to withstand a barrage of criticism. You will wilt under the onslaught of specific and often surprising questions, each of which needs to be handled if people confused about the Faith are to have their doubts cleared up. The trouble is that writers of surveys of Catholicism do not ask tough questions or put you on the spot. That is not their purpose. They presume you are predisposed to the Faith and are seeking to broaden your knowledge generally. That is admirable and necessary, but you can have a general grasp yet be unable to say anything sensible to fundamentalists when they question you, because their questions throw you for a loop. You will rarely guess correctly how they will phrase their accusations, because your presuppositions are different. It takes a Catholic considerable training and a long tenure in the school of hard knocks to begin to think like a fundamentalist, to pose the kinds of questions fundamentalists pose.

To get a feel for what you would be up against, particularly if you want to do apologetics work on a serious basis, you need to see just what fundamentalists say about the Church—and in their own words. Write to anti-Catholic organizations (see the Appendix for addresses) and request sample literature. Some Catholics hesitate doing this. They cannot bear giving professional anti-Catholics a penny. They think doing so is almost treasonous. The feeling is understandable, but it is a matter of false scruples. If you were a military commander and your counterpart on the other side had written a book outlining his tactical theories, you would be wise to let him have the royalties and get a copy of his book into your hands as soon as possible. You would owe it to your cause.

So write away for anti-Catholic literature, study it, and learn on which topics you need help, but do not limit yourself to acquiring tracts. No collection of anti-Catholic material would be complete without a copy of Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*.³ Many Protestant bookstores carry it; if it cannot be found on the shelves, it can be ordered through them or through any other bookstore. Although a fat hardback, it is cheap, and some fundamentalist and evangelical bookstores carry it at a good discount over the already-low cover price, perhaps a prime reason it has been disseminated so widely.

The core of many arguments, historical or otherwise, will be the Bible, and the apologist needs to be at ease with it. Fundamentalists often work on the

principle that the Bible is such a straightforward book that any literate person can pick it up and, without much trouble, find the correct interpretation of any passage, presuming he has been “born again”. Those not reborn, in the fundamentalists’ sense of the term, have no guarantee they will arrive at the right understanding.

Fundamentalists think the intervening centuries have not made the Bible any more confusing for us than it was for people who lived in New Testament times, and they think that way (although they do not realize it) because they begin, not with the Bible, but with an accepted set of beliefs, which they then substantiate by “searching the Scriptures”.

The truth is that the Bible is both an easy and a difficult book. It is easy in its language—no jargon or bureaucratese here—but it is difficult in that it is not really one book, but six dozen books composed over centuries for a variety of reasons and audiences. No sacred writer thought, as he sat down with pen and papyrus, that he was adding the *nth* chapter to a single book in the way that, some years ago, there was a fad among writers of detective stories to compose books each chapter of which was by a different author and was built directly on the chapters preceding.⁴ No, the Bible is better thought of as a miscellany. The New Testament alone has several kinds of writings: four partially overlapping biographies, something at once a history and a travelogue, private letters written to individuals and open ones written to small communities, and an example of a peculiar kind of literature, the apocalyptic. The same goes for the Old Testament, which contains still other kinds of works: law codes, prophetic utterances, poetry, even an extended love song.

The Catholic needs to read the Bible, of course, and to read it regularly, but that is hardly enough. He needs also works that will make up for time lost, that will give him insights that he might reach only after decades of assiduous and prayerful reading of the sacred text, and he needs an appreciation of the background of the Bible, of the kinds of works it contains, and of methods and theories of interpretation. Only when he has this will his Bible reading turn truly fruitful.

The first thing, then, after securing one or more translations of the Bible itself, to buy is a commentary. Still available from used-book dealers is *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*,⁵ published in Britain in 1953 and using the Douay-Rheims translation. The editorial committee was headed by Bernard Orchard, and contributors included such men as B. C. Butler,

Thomas Corbishley, C. C. Martindale, E. C. Messenger, and Hugh Pope.⁶ In addition to commentaries on individual books of the Bible, this work includes thirty-five articles introducing the Old and New Testaments and examining such topics as the synoptic problem, the various texts and versions of the Bible, proper interpretation, inspiration and inerrancy, and the geography and history of Israel.

In 1969 appeared *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*,⁷ using the Revised Standard Version instead of the Douay-Rheims. About a fifth of the original edition was carried over, as were several of the original contributors. The new edition is superior in some ways (for example, it takes into account real advances in biblical scholarship), but it may not appeal to everyone in other ways.

As a substitute or supplement one should consider *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*,⁸ first published in 1968 and since updated and stocked by most Catholic bookstores. Although this American commentary is not as trustworthy as its British counterparts, it is still worth having, and the orthodox Catholic can skip the more tendentious essays. After all, when it comes to comments on individual books of the Bible, as distinguished from articles giving overviews of the Pentateuch or the life of Christ, there is little room for foolery. In any event, do not be put off by being unable to locate an ideal commentary, since there is no such thing.

Newer than the latest commentaries is William G. Most's *Free from All Error*.⁹ Most, known for his orthodoxy and willingness to engage modernists in verbal combat, examines the authorship, inerrancy, and historicity of Scripture. In this book, which is not a replacement for but a fine addition to a commentary, he devotes separate chapters to Genesis, the infancy narratives, apocalyptic books, and wisdom literature. He examines the historical-critical method of scriptural interpretation, the prejudices of form and redaction critics, and how we determine which books are inspired and belong in the Bible and which are not and do not.

Also worth having are two books by John Steinmueller, the three-volume *Companion to Scripture Studies*¹⁰ and *The Sword of the Spirit*.¹¹ The first volume of the *Companion* discusses inspiration, the canon of the Bible, texts and versions, and hermeneutics. It considers the history of exegesis in the ancient, medieval, and modern periods and biblical antiquities, which include sacred places (such as the temples of Solomon, Zorobabel, and Herod), sacred persons, sacred rituals, and even sacred seasons, and it closes with a

chapter on the geography of the Holy Land.

The second volume covers the Old Testament, while the third covers the New. Each book of the Bible is considered, but not in the manner of a commentary. Steinmueller does not use a verse-by-verse approach. Typically, after giving a bibliography, he presents an outline of a book, then devotes a few paragraphs to its author, origin, intended audience, and special aims. In the third volume each book of the New Testament is given more space than could be given in the second volume to each of the Old, and there is a fine analysis of the synoptic problem and a useful, if unhappily too short, life of Christ.

The Sword of the Spirit covers the meaning, inspiration, authors, and canon of the Bible, biblical theology, the history of the Bible, and conflicting views in modern biblical scholarship. It might be read before turning to a commentary or the more daunting *Companion*. Steinmueller's pages on early English versions of the Bible will be a disappointment to fundamentalists who pick up *The Sword of the Spirit*, most of them having a sense that the King James Version was the first in English (and some of them believing it was in fact the *original* version), because he shows English translations long predated the Reformation. Catholics new to the history of the Bible will benefit from this discussion, although for the full story one needs to turn to Hugh Pope's *English Versions of the Bible*,¹² which examines at greater length than one might think possible all the translations to the twentieth century.

Another handy work is Henri Daniel-Rops' *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*.¹³ This supplement to the commentaries is an extended and readable examination of the society of first-century Palestine. Discussed are the class structure, personal cleanliness, arts and science, occupations, the Jewish family, the city of Jerusalem, and much more, in a text the cover blurb rightly calls "a masterful synthesis of the complex array of the economic, political, and cultural currents of the pivotal era of human history". It is the kind of book the apologist will want to reach for when his discussions with fundamentalists involve interpreting Scripture in light of its own time.

Fundamentalists do not argue against the Church merely from Scripture, limiting themselves to events of the first century. They also decry later Catholic "inventions" and what they consider to be the universally sorry history of the universal Church. The more knowledgeable among them bring up specific historical points—the Inquisition, the "bad Popes", abuses leading

up to the Reformation—and expect Catholics to be able to explain how such enormities could proceed from the Church Christ established.

There are two problems here. First, most of the ecclesiastical history fundamentalists know is wrong, being little more than vague prejudices mixed with scraps of pseudolearning. Few of them, though, have any reason to doubt that what has been handed down to them (part of their “tradition”, in a way) is the real story of the Catholic Church.

The second problem is that, although some of the history they have is accurate, at least in the bare sense of dates and names, they have no grasp of what that history *means*. Their basic problem, of course, is that their own religion is frozen in apostolic times. They fail to see that the true Faith may alter its appearance, although not its content, as the centuries pass, and that later events can shed light on earlier, just as the New Testament allows a deeper appreciation of the Old; and they forget, it seems, that Christianity, although not *of* the world, is certainly *in* it. From decades of refusing to examine events with a critical mind, their instincts have become antihistorical.

Fundamentalists rightly note that priestly celibacy became mandatory only in the Middle Ages, but they have no feel for the process leading up to the rule and so conclude it was instituted out of the blue. They know Constantine legalized Christianity in 313, and they have been told his Edict of Milan precipitated the rise of the Catholic Church, but they know little of the shape of Christianity in the years immediately preceding or following Constantine’s rule. They envision distinctively Catholic practices, such as auricular confession and the use of Latin, as popping up out of nowhere, and this bothers them no end—as it should, if their historical outlook were true.

The only way to overcome these stumbling blocks—and that is just what so much of Catholicism is when not understood in itself—is for the Catholic apologist to be able to take each historical question and find an answer, putting the issue in context, first showing what really happened, then integrating the facts with what his fundamentalist questioner already knows, thus giving him the broad picture. This can cause endless headaches, of course, and sometimes it is either impossible or not worth trying to accomplish, but often it is crucial.

Most fundamentalists embrace only one or two historical squabbles with gusto, and, if their confusions about them can be cleared up—and it may take very little effort to do that—they will be open to learning about the Faith.

They will then be receptive to talk about the other historical complaints they have, the ones on which they do not stake their reputations. A few fundamentalists have so many questions and know so much that is not so, that one cannot hope to satisfy them, no matter how much homework is done, no matter how many citations are given, no matter how many pages from history texts are photocopied and sent off with explanatory cover letters. A hundred matters can be settled to then grudging satisfaction, but, hydralike, two hundred more will arise. These people can be touched only by grace, not by anything the Catholic apologist can do. They revel in their confusion and would be lost if they did not have a full bag of complaints concerning the history of the Church.

Yet they are a small minority of fundamentalists, most of whom can be approached on the level of history, most of whom would welcome serious historical discussions (which is not to say, by any means, that one needs to be a certified historian to speak with them). To enter such discussions, whether on the lecture platform, in a Bible-study class, or around the cracker barrel, the Catholic needs, in addition to a thick skin, a good grounding in Church history. He does not need to have on the tip of his tongue an answer to every question, although there are a few standard complaints for which he indeed will have set replies. He needs to be able to look up answers in handy reference works, ones that are really useful for his purposes. When he tells a fundamentalist that he will get back with the answer in a few days, he needs to be able to do just that. Not to get back with an answer because one does not have on hand the right books means, to a suspicious interlocutor, that there is no answer to his charge.

Some of the best historical works are no longer in print, such as Newman Eberhardt's *A Summary of Catholic History*,¹⁴ Fernand Mourret's *A History of the Catholic Church*,¹⁵ and Henri Daniel-Rops' *History of the Church of Christ*.¹⁶ An especially promising venture is Warren Carroll's six-volume project titled *A History of Christendom*,¹⁷ At this writing incomplete, the series can be highly recommended as orthodox, temperate, detailed, and accurate. Another fine history is Philip Hughes' *History of the Church*.¹⁸ This three-volume set takes the story to the time of Luther. Hughes was unable to finish the planned fourth volume, but that does not matter much, since most questions fundamentalists have about Catholic history concern matters in the early centuries and in the Middle Ages.

Published concurrently with Hughes' three-volume set was a one-volume

abridgment, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*.¹⁹ It carries the story to 1946, and, although pre-Reformation topics are handled more concisely than in the larger work, the book gives the reader new to Church history a surprisingly satisfying overview of events. For the first time there is a real connection between the history of the first years of the Church, as found in the New Testament, and the history one has lived through. The first century is tied to the twentieth, the intervening years no longer being a void.

Not to be overlooked is the first major historical work by a Christian, the fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History*²⁰ of Eusebius. Available with Greek and English on facing pages, it will impress on the reader better than any other ancient writing that the Catholic Church and its distinguishing elements existed from the first.

A history book deals mainly with people and actions and not so much with ideas and their development, although that necessarily plays a substantial part in any history of Catholicism. It is hard to trace doctrinal developments, no matter how many straight history texts one has access to. What is needed is an account of the history of beliefs themselves. The premier work of that kind is Joseph Tixeront's *History of Dogmas*,²¹ a three-volume set that is prime reading for the apologist. As John A. Hardon explains on the cover, Tixeront takes the basic truths of the Faith and "analyzes these truths in their historical context from the New Testament through the last of the Fathers in the eighth century. Three crucial concepts are especially demonstrated: (1) that the Catholic faith has remained essentially unchanged since the time of Christ to the present day, (2) that there nevertheless has been a marvelous development of doctrine fulfilling Christ's prophecy, 'when the spirit of truth comes He will lead you to the complete truth' (John 16:13), and (3) that this continuity and development of Christian doctrine has been possible only because of the Roman Catholic Church, of which the Bishop of Rome is the visible head."

An invaluable companion series is Johannes Quasten's *Patrology*.²² This standard reference work, in four volumes, is an introduction to the Christian authors of the early centuries. (Patrology, the study of the Fathers of the Church, of their contemporaries—both orthodox and heterodox—and of the authenticity of the works attributed to them, should be distinguished from patristics, the study of their thought, which is more the kind of thing found in Tixeront's books.) *Patrology* will give the reader a good grasp of how Christian literature developed in the early centuries, and that in turn shows the continuity of the Church and its doctrines.

William A. Jurgens' *The Faith of the Early Fathers*²³ is another three-volume set that covers the same years as does Tixeront's and somewhat more than does Quasten's—that is, from the first century through the eighth. It is a work of remarkable compression and utility and cannot be recommended highly enough.

There are available, for hundreds of dollars, English translations of early Christian literature, not just the writings of the Fathers, but also of other orthodox commentators and of heretics. These shelf-long sets are for libraries and for bookish apologists with fat wallets. Until Jurgens' anthology appeared, there was nothing convenient in size that could be had at a convenient price. The value of *The Faith of the Early Fathers* is not to be found, though, in how much shelf space or how many dollars it saves, but in its doctrinal index, which lets the reader locate at once references to the sorts of issues fundamentalists bring up. There are 2,390 quotations in the three volumes, some a few lines long, some several paragraphs, and they are cross-referenced under 1,046 doctrinal headings, which are organized much like a catechism.

For example, headings 849 through 899 deal with the Eucharist. Headings 849 through 867, which include 88 citations (some of the headings having more than a dozen), are restricted to the topic of the Real Presence, and numbers 868 through 899 cover Communion, the Mass, and liturgy and law. Heading 851, for instance, is the proposition that "Christ is really present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine". Twenty citations are given. Number 852 is that "the truth of the Real Presence is evident from the words of institution", and for that there are seven citations.

In addition to the doctrinal index there are an index of scriptural references and a detailed alphabetical index. What is more, each writer and his works are introduced in a few well-turned paragraphs. Jurgens includes helpful footnotes, covering all the hard or controverted points, and gives suggestions for further reading.

As a final handbook on doctrines, consider Ludwig Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*.²⁴ This is a true tome, but one worth obtaining. It is invaluable for the research an apologist promises to do on short notice, and ex-Catholics who are returning to the Faith through a program of good reading have said Ott's work, though intimidating at first sight, is helpful because it presents so much between two covers. Ott discusses the whole of Catholic dogma, and the value of his work lies not just in his precision and

compact explanations, but in his references. How can Catholics claim the Church was established as a visible institution? What is the basis for that? Ott covers the issue, giving references to and quotations from papal encyclicals (somewhat useful, but of course not authoritative in fundamentalists' eyes), the Bible (here is what they want), the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and Church councils. He also gives heretical views, referring to the theories of the Spiritualist sects of the Middle Ages, to Hus, Calvin, and Luther. So it goes, with every topic.

Ott does not present a complete answer in the form fundamentalists will understand or find convincing, at least not usually, and his is certainly not the first book one would recommend to a fundamentalist beginning to learn about the Faith or to an uninstructed Catholic. But it can put the Catholic apologist on the right track, ensuring he will find all the right biblical references and enough other leads so he can build firm arguments.

Not exactly a handbook on doctrines, but an extended commentary on their growth, is the premier theological work in English, John Henry Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.²⁵ While not the first book the apologist will want for his library, it is one he should read early on so he can understand how an examination of the history of doctrines can lead one to the Church. Newman was an Anglican with strong Catholic sympathies when he began writing this book, and as he finished it he converted. One might say he wrote himself into the Church. What his research demonstrated to him was that the Catholic Church, contrary to what he had been brought up to believe, had not added dogmas at random; there were no Catholic "inventions", but maturations of the original deposit of faith.

If one were to select a single book as a guide to the art of apologetics, it would be Frank Sheed's *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*.²⁶ This marvelous work was used to train members of the Catholic Evidence Guild, which Sheed and his wife, Maisie Ward, guided more than half a century ago. At one time the Guild had six hundred street-corner preachers in England alone. Street-corner preaching, of course, is now passe: anyone talking religion from a soapbox in the park is presumed to be a bit off—and usually is. Besides, the audiences have changed.

In the twenties, thirties, and forties, one could stand up in Hyde Park, announce that papal infallibility was the topic, and be sure of gathering a crowd that included, along with the usual assortment of cranks and habitual hecklers, a large number of intelligent listeners. However popular street-

corner preaching once was in England, its popularity here was never great, and in both places it has nearly disappeared. But no matter. The lessons that Sheed taught his Guild members two generations ago are just the lessons serious Catholic apologists need to learn today, and they can be used effectively in one-on-one talks or in group discussions.

Catholic Evidence Training Outlines went through several editions, rapidly improving with age and experience. The book began as a collection of short lesson plans used in the weekly courses Guild members had to take (and pass, after rigorous tests) before being allowed to speak publicly. Opposite the title page is a boxed warning that “the speakers are again reminded that these are not street-corner outlines but class outlines to prepare them for the street corner”, and that is just what the bulk of the book is.

The first forty pages are devoted to the theory of street-corner apologetics (perfectly applicable still, even if the discussion takes place in the home, on the steps outside of church, or in print, rather than on a lecture platform) and to how Guild training should be organized. Sheed had it down to a science, and it shows in his writing.

Then come two dozen short chapters, if they can be called chapters—the course for junior speakers, people who were allowed to speak on only the basics. Twice as many chapters cover topics for senior speakers. Each chapter consists of a narrowly drawn topic, the key points schematically described; recommended readings; and true-to-life sample questions. The student who could not answer each question with aplomb (and they are tough) could not graduate from one subject to the next. It was common to find hundreds of Guild members who were allowed to talk on only a handful of topics. It took years of regular training to become a senior speaker or, higher still, a chairman, the person who acted as moderator on the platform and who was considered competent to handle any question the audience might pose.

As a rule, several people would speak, taking turns. A senior speaker might start off, to get the crowd warmed up. Then a junior speaker or two would give ten-minute talks on some of the basics of the Faith. Then, perhaps, another senior speaker would have as his topic a particularly sticky or confusing issue, such as the Inquisition or the Mystical Body of Christ. Questions could come from the crowd at any time, and heckling was common. It was the chairman’s job to get the speakers up and (just as important) down in a timely manner, and he would take over if a speaker was getting in over his head or was losing control of the crowd.

All in all, it was a thorough, militarylike system, one that worked remarkably well in bringing converts to the Church and in developing the faith of the Catholics who participated. The scheme of operation can be appreciated by reading the nine “technical lectures” that are sandwiched between the junior and senior courses. They are on such things as “Relating to the Mind of the Listeners”, “How to Handle a Crowd”, and dealing with “Questions and Interjections”. At the end of the book, in addition to an appendix comprised of six specialized lectures, is a general survey of key points.²⁷

If *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines* is the best source book to have, a good runner-up, and one that is easily obtained, is *Radio Replies*,²⁸ Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty’s three-volume set. The books contain 4,374 questions posed to the “Radio Priests” during their many years on the air in the United States and Australia. The questions are tough because they are authentic. Rumble and Carty took the questions as they were sent in and prepared complete, readable, and pointed responses. Virtually every question a fundamentalist could ask will be found in *Radio Replies*. What is more, virtually every question a nonreligious skeptic or a confused Catholic could ask will be found there.

True, these books are old, the last appearing in 1942, but it is uncanny how useful they are now. Only a handful of the hundreds of topics considered are truly dated, and of course some of the terminology has changed. Those are minor points. Anyone not prejudiced against what was written the day before yesterday will profit immensely from *Radio Replies*. These might well be the most-thumbed books on an apologist’s shelf, the ones he turns to first when he promises to find an answer to a question that is puzzling a prospective convert to (or from) Catholicism.

Fulton Sheen began his preface to *Radio Replies* by noting that “there are not over a hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions, however, who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church—which is quite a different thing. . . . If, then, the hatred of the Church is founded on erroneous beliefs, it follows that [the] basic need of the day is instruction.”²⁹ And *Radio Replies* is certainly a gem of an instructional aid. Sometimes Rumble and Carty cover a topic completely, giving the reader far more than he needs to satisfy his curiosity. At other times they give, if not a full treatment, at least enough that the reader knows where to look for detailed information.

There are other works by Frank Sheed that deserve mention, because he probably had a firmer grasp of practical apologetics than any other recent Catholic writer. His *Theology and Sanity*³⁰ was originally published in 1946; the revised paperback edition features a fascinating preface in which Sheed gives some history of his street-corner apostolate and pokes fun at people who siphon the reality out of the Resurrection and Ascension, “leaving for our nourishment only the spiritual meaning of incidents all the truer for never having happened!” He explains:

When I wrote *Theology and Sanity*, I had been teaching the Faith under the open sky for a quarter of a century. . . . Every paragraph had been tried out on forty or fifty outdoor audiences before I got it down on paper. Listeners were free to walk away the moment they were bored—I tried to learn from their boredom. If they stayed, they could utter their reactions—anything from agreement to intelligent criticism to mockery to blasphemy—with a freedom which speakers who knew only the ivory tower of pulpit or lecture hall found unnerving. It was unbelievably educative. I doubt if there was any objection against the Faith in all the centuries that was not hurled at us. And, unlike the great theologians whose writings had helped to form our minds, we could not go off and think about the objection for a year or two, then write an article. We had to cope—somehow—there and then. The crowd was truly co-author of the book; not a sentence that has not been reshaped by them. This really is *aggiornamento*—doctrines restated, not to be made more acceptable but more comprehensible, related to the questions people were actually asking, to the needs they were actually feeling, in the language they actually spoke.³¹

This book presents to the reader a fully rounded and accurate representation of the Catholic view of reality, a view remarkably unlike that held by fundamentalists. Even most Catholics have a weak appreciation of it, and it is something that needs to be well comprehended by anyone wanting to pass along the Faith. The title *Theology and Sanity* comes from Sheed’s notion that to be truly sane is to take into account the whole of reality as it really is. To disbelieve in the supernatural (as even many Catholics, *in practice*, seem to do), is to live other than sanely, much as a physician who disbelieves in bacteria lives other than sanely.

Sheed begins with a fine explanation of the Trinity, which is usually thought of as a dry topic but which his outdoor crowds found the most captivating. The next section looks at angels and men, the Fall, the Redemption, and the Mystical Body of Christ, and it gives perhaps the best popular account of life after death to be found anywhere. The last section explains why we need to be habituated to reality, how our insufficiencies are made up for by the sufficiencies of the Church, and how “sanity points toward sanctity”.³²

It is not enough to have the Faith firmly in hand and to be able to answer questions with, a glib tongue. There is a tendency for religion to seem dry, Scholastic in the bad sense. This is easily overcome if one has a deep appreciation of the life of Christ. The New Testament, of course, is the place to turn, but reading it alone is insufficient unless one is graced with considerable powers of synthesis. Help is needed to see the larger picture, and there are several books that do a fine job in that.

Again, one is by Sheed. It is *To Know Christ Jesus*.³³ The opening line of the foreword says, “This book is not a Life of Christ.” Sheed means there is too much we do not know about Jesus, at least regarding his everyday activities (we know, for instance, only one event between his infancy and the start of his ministry), for this to be a regular biography. What Sheed proposes to do, and what he does admirably, is introduce us to Someone through the Gospels. His book is really a preparation for reading the Gospels. Things are put in the right sequence, in the right perspective, and then, when one turns back to the sacred writings, there is a new and deeper understanding. The Gospels are in many ways so haphazard in organization, so confusing in terminology, that we need a road map to get around them and to know what we have seen. It is a bit like visiting a large city. You can drive around all day and still have no feel for it; but study a map, see where the main buildings are and how the highways intersect, and you can get back in the car and, for the first time, really appreciate what is there.

Similar to Sheed’s book is Fulton Sheen’s *Life of Christ*,³⁴ his most famous work. Written in response to an unnamed trial that afflicted him for years, it centers on what struck him as the main point of Christ’s life, that Christ did not come into the world to live but to die. “Unless there is a Good Friday in our lives there will never be an Easter Sunday. The Cross is the condition of the empty tomb, and the crown of thorns is the preface to the halo of light.”³⁵ Sheen takes the reader through our Lord’s life chronologically, as might be expected, and he punctuates his recounting of what we think should be a familiar tale with astonishing insights. This book is every bit as good as Sheed’s in giving the prospective apologist the indispensable overview.

Not to be overlooked is Romano Guardini’s *The Lord*,³⁶ which may be the epitome of the genre. Guardini begins by noting that neither a psychology nor a biography of Jesus is possible;—the divine is not to be comprehended by finite minds.

All we can do is ponder such words as: “And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men” (Luke 2:52), or the passage in the Epistle to the Galatians which describes him as one “in the fullness of time,” ripening to maturity deeply conscious of the history about him. . . . We can only reverently pause before this or that word or act, ready to learn, adore, obey.

Guardini offers “the spiritual commentaries of some four years of Sunday services undertaken with the sole purpose of obeying as well as possible the Lord’s command to proclaim him, his message, and his works”.³⁷ It is generally agreed that Guardini fulfilled his task well.

Gathering the books mentioned in this chapter will be neither convenient nor inexpensive. While only someone wanting to go into apologetics on a more or less formal basis (or a bookworm) will acquire all the books, any Catholic who wants to develop his own faith so he can speak effectively with fundamentalists will get most of them. The fundamentalist problem is not a small one, and the problems fundamentalists have with Catholicism are not few. There is no one book that will arm Catholics adequately for the task, and it will take months to read what *must* be read. But the homework needs to be done—for oneself, for one’s family and friends who might be tempted toward fundamentalism, and for fundamentalists, both ex-Catholic and never-Catholic, who are thinking of coming home to Rome or who, if they find their questions answered, might start thinking that way.

Chapter 26

Afterword

“There is something very gallant about these Literalists”, wrote Hilaire Belloc nearly a lifetime ago. The people known today as fundamentalists

never retreated, they never surrendered, they were incapable of maneuver, and the few that remain will die where they stand rather give way a foot. Their simplicity sometimes has a holy quality about it. . . . Most of us, asked to make a guess, would say that in fifty years no odd Literalist could still be found crawling on the earth. Do not be too sure. Our children may live to see a revival of this type in some strange land.¹

Writing only five years after the Scopes Trial, Belloc naturally emphasized fundamentalism’s attitude toward the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Perhaps that was all he knew about this brand of Christianity. Besides, it was mainly an American phenomenon, and the real battles were being fought elsewhere. Still, he perceived fundamentalists’ tenacity. Whatever they stood for, they stood for it solidly, and he was right to imagine a revival of fundamentalism “in some strange land”, such as the one across the Atlantic from England. He had no way of knowing, of course, of the travails the Catholic Church would undergo during the next half century. He could not imagine a resurgence of modernism, which seemed quite dead in 1930, or how, in two generations, Catholics would be woefully uninstructed in their religion, easy marks for sects that offered simple answers for the spiritual problems of an age that had ceased to be Christian in any real sense. He could not know of the hollowness so many Catholics would feel—good people who one day woke to realize that their bonds to the Church were tenuous and that they might happily go wherever the Bible, as interpreted by fundamentalists, seemed to lead them.

Someone who understands all this is Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. The Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has said that

[o]ur catechesis . . . must unmask the point on which these new “missionaries” harp: the impression, namely, that Scripture is to be read in a “literal” sense, while Catholics assertedly have weakened or forgotten it. This *literalness* often signifies a betrayal of *fidelity*. The isolation

of single sentences and verses is misleading and loses sight of the whole. Read as a whole, the Bible is really “Catholic”, But this must first be shown through a catechetical instruction that would rehabilitate the faithful to a reading of sacred Scripture in and with the Church.²

The key, then, is instruction—and not just in the proper approach to the Bible, but to all aspects of the Faith. Almost without exception, Catholics returning to the Church from fundamentalism report they never would have left had they been well catechized. Had they known what the Catholic religion really was, they would have been able to deal with awkward questions thrown their way. Fundamentalist neighborliness, however freely accepted, would not have resulted in the acceptance of fundamentalist doctrines.

Many Catholics think people are attracted to fundamentalism only for social and emotional reasons; since such suasions cannot be overcome by syllogisms, they see no point in discussing doctrines. Catholics who have returned to the Church from fundamentalism put the emphasis differently. They admit that frustration with the Church and its officials and members may have played a part in their conversion to fundamentalism, and they acknowledge that personal problems, such as loneliness, may have made fundamentalism (or at least fundamentalists) look attractive at the beginning. Yet they almost universally declare that what kept them out of the Catholic Church was doctrine. Whatever their initial reasons for examining fundamentalism, they stayed away from Catholicism because they decided its teachings were untrue.

They also reconverted for doctrinal reasons. They came to understand that fundamentalism contains much religious truth, but also much error, and the fullness of religious truth, they learned, can only be found at Rome. They came to believe in the Catholic religion again because someone took the time to tell them what the Church really stands for or because, fortuitously, they stumbled on the facts for themselves.

The committed fundamentalist, who is often a former Catholic, *knows* the Catholic religion is wrong and thinks he can prove it from the Bible. The first step is to demonstrate to him that much of what he knows simply is not so. Emotional barriers will be overcome later, and they will fall as he realizes he has not been told the whole story. Glad-handing alone will not suffice; in fact, it is often counterproductive. The fundamentalist *wants* Catholics to discuss doctrines, and when they do not—when they deliberately shy away from even trying—he concludes their doctrinal beliefs are groundless, and the

indictment against Rome seems rock solid.

Although it is essential to treat fundamentalists with respect and love (especially difficult for those too quick with jabs, whether verbal or pugilistic), that is hardly sufficient and will resolve no confusions and produce no converts. Fundamentalists must be approached on the level of doctrine, which means making biblical (but also historical and other) arguments. It has been on the level of doctrine that the fundamentalist challenge to the Church has found its power. This power lies not in the objective truth of the fundamentalist position, which is a mixture of truth and error, but in fundamentalism's insistence that truth really matters, that one's salvation depends on accepting God's truth in its entirety, in all its consequences. People find this intellectually challenging and immensely attractive—and not just attractive, but compelling, for who says A must say B.

If Catholics expect to answer fundamentalism, they will have to answer it not just with charity—necessary, although hardly sufficient—but with doctrine. They will have to appeal not just to the heart but to the intellect. After all, it is the truth that sets us free.

Appendix

Materials explaining and defending Catholic beliefs, history, and practices may be obtained from Catholic Answers, Inc., a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization run by Catholic laymen. Its director is the author of this book. Available are a monthly publication titled *Catholic Answers*, tracts (in English or Spanish) on a wide variety of topics, and audiocassette tapes of debates and lectures. Write for a catalogue, sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Catholic Answers

P. O. Box 17181

San Diego, California 92117

Anti-Catholic literature may be obtained on request or for a small donation from the following organizations. When writing, ask for a catalogue and samples of literature.

1. Chick Publications
P. O. Box 662
Chino, California 91710
2. Christians Evangelizing Catholics
P.O. Box 24758
San Jose, California 95154
3. The Conversion Center
Drawer V
Havertown, Pennsylvania 19083
4. Mission to Catholics International
P. O. Box 19280

San Diego, California 92119

5. Radio Bible Class

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49555-0001

6. Jimmy Swaggart Ministries

P. O. Box 2550

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-2550

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NOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹ Standard works on fundamentalism include James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977); Gabriel Hebert, *Fundamentalism and the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957); George Marsden, ed., *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); Jerry Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (New York: Doubleday, 1981); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). [Back to Text.](#)

² See p. 19, below. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Many “professional anti-Catholics” converted from Catholicism, a fact that leads some critics of fundamentalism to conclude, wrongly, that anti-Catholicism is a manifestation not of doctrinal differences, but of emotional traumas in the converted. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Fundamentalism is restricted mainly to English-speaking countries but it is spreading rapidly elsewhere. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 19. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Edward Dobson, “Fundamentalism—Its Roots”, *New Catholic World*, January / February 1985, 5. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Dobson, “Fundamentalism”, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Dobson, “Fundamentalism”, 7. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ As an example of the Catholic apologetic, see Arnold Lunn, *The Third Day* (London: Burns Oates, 1945). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ A. C. Dixon et al., eds., *The Fundamentals* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1909), 2:239. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ There are innumerable variations on the theme, with many

fundamentalists coming close to mimicking William Miller both in his penchant for setting dates for the Second Coming (he guessed 1843, later 1844) and in his accuracy as a prognosticator. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Some fundamentalists read others right out of Christianity for occasionally throwing the dice or bending the arm, although the Bible nowhere condemns gambling with one's superfluous wealth or drinking spirits in moderation. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Peggy L. Shriver, "Guardians of Fundamentalism's Fortress", *New Catholic World*, January/February 1985, 15. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 13-18. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 2

¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, x. [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 118. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The books by Catholics include James Gibbons, *Faith of Our Fathers* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1876); John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1938); John A. Ryan and Francis J. Boland, *Catholic Principles of Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1949); Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1949); Glenn D. Kittler, *The Papal Princes* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1960); Martin J. Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked About* (New York: Kenedy, 1927); Fulton J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Most works that present the Catholic Faith accurately do not anticipate fundamentalist attacks and so hardly can be faulted for not answering questions they were not intended to answer. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 127. Hughes is quoted as saying that Gregory the Great "is the founder of the papal monarchy", and Boettner says Hughes is admitting that Gregory was the first Pope, which is the standard fundamentalist position. Actually, Hughes is referring to the establishment of the papal political monarchy, not to the establishment of the papacy—something clear if the few sentences quoted from him are read in context. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Some of his books, such as *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*, seem never to have gone out of print. There is always a

market for the lurid. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 244-45. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Strossmayer, Joseph Georg”, 14:316. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 235. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 235. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 7-9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ The ellipses appear in Boettner’s list of “inventions”. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Tertullian, *De corona* 3,2. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ The first theologian of note to oppose the doctrine of transubstantiation was Berengarius of Tours (c. 1000-1088), [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Origen, *In Leviticum homiliae* 2, 4. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Aphraates, *Demonstrationes* 7,3. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (Everyman’s Library), 1:376. [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 185. [Back to Text.](#)

²² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 189. [Back to Text.](#)

²³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 136. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 302. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 53. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 163. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 151. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 184. [Back to Text.](#)

³⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 59. [Back to Text.](#)

³¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 215. [Back to Text.](#)

³² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 323. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 3

¹ The pastor of the church told a visitor, “We bought this place from the jews at a good price”, beating them at their own game, he apparently

thought. [Back to Text.](#)

² The books include titles by Avro Manhattan, an inveterate anti-Catholic and author of *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, *The Vatican Billions*, *Catholic Power Today*, *Murder in the Vatican*, and *Vatican Imperialism in the 20th Century*. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The last year for which Mission to Catholics International published figures was 1979. In its January 1980 newsletter, it reported that during the previous year more than 250,000 books, tracts, and tapes were distributed. At that time most of the organization's work was restricted to the seven westernmost states. It has since expanded throughout the continental United States and into Europe. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Although leaders of anti-Catholic groups regularly deny any advocacy of trespassing, harassment, or vandalism, their rhetoric is so strident that their more zealous followers draw the necessary inferences. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Bartholomew F. Brewer, *Pilgrimage from Rome* (Greenville, S.C.: Boh Jones University Press, 1982). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ In a tract titled *The Conversion of a Catholic Priest*. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Bernard Berenson, *Rumor and Reflection* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1952), 43. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1949), 56. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ *Challenger* (San Diego: Mission to Catholics International), June 1983. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Given in conferences at a retreat for the priests of the Archdiocese of Washington in 1974. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ *Challenger*, April 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² *Challenger*, February 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Complaints from Catholics are printed occasionally, most of them badly reasoned or entirely unreasoned; they serve as useful straw men. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Including a talk, appropriately enough, in West Babylon, New York. *Challenger*, March 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ When a verse's plain or primary sense argues in favor of the Catholic position, anti-Catholics ignore that sense and base their attack on a less-likely sense, often not admitting that their case is not open and shut. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Frank Sheed and Maisie ward, *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*, 4th ed. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948), 232. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 4

¹ One naturally would like to see how local newspapers characterized the incident. [Back to Text.](#)

² The passage actually reads this way: “The spirit of old Rome has risen again in its former place, and has evidenced its identity by its works. It has possessed the Church there planted, as an evil spirit might seize the demoniacs of primitive times, and makes her speak words which are not her own. In the corrupt Papal system we have the very cruelty, the craft, and the ambition of the Republic; its cruelty in its unsparing sacrifice of the happiness and virtue of individuals to a phantom of public expediency, in its forced celibacy within, and its persecutions without; its craft in its falsehoods, its deceitful deeds and lying wonders; and its grasping ambition in the very structure of its polity, in its assumption of universal dominion: old Rome is still alive; no where have its eagles lighted, but it still claims the sovereignty under another pretence. The Roman Church I will not blame, but pity—she is, as I have said, spellbound, as if by an evil spirit; she is in thralldom.” John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), 60. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The disinclination of the Conversion Center to locate more recent photographs parallels its disinclination to discover what the Catholic Church really believes. It is more convenient to use photographs on hand, as it is more convenient to use anti-Catholic arguments handed down from father to son. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ The great advantage possessed by anti-Catholics is that so few of their targets have the stamina to compose the necessary replies, and thus many charges go unanswered. The claims made about the papacy will be answered in later chapters of this book. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ T. S. Eliot, “Choruses from ‘The Rock’ ”, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909—1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1971), 108. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Hilaire Belloc, “Heroic Poem in Praise of Wine”, *Complete Verse*, ed. W. N. Roughead (London: Duckworth, 1970), 80. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 5

¹ January 1985 issue. [Back to Text.](#)

² November 1984 issue. [Back to Text.](#)

³ *Pro (Eternal) Life*, [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Ironically, many ex-fundamentalists depict fundamentalism as a cult, complete with “brainwashing”, but it is difficult to locate ex-Catholics who consider Catholicism a cult in the same sense. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Even John Foxe, author of the decidedly anti-Catholic *Book of Martyrs* (1563), denied this. He wrote, “If histories be well examined we shall find both before the Conquest and after, as well before John Wickliffe was born as since, the whole body of the Scriptures was by sundry men translated into our country tongue.” Hugh Pope, *English Versions of the Bible* (St. Louis: Herder, 1952), 63. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 6

¹ Jimmy Swaggart, “Startling Incidents and Amazing Answers to Prayer”, *The Evangelist*, July 1985, 45. [Back to Text.](#)

² Swaggart is also a singer and claims that his income comes strictly from record sales. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Jerry Falweil reports that thirty percent of *his* support comes from Catholics, but Swaggart’s is probably less. Falweil projects a more refined, urban image—most Catholics in America have urban backgrounds, not rural—and does not collapse into anti-Catholicism the way Swaggart does. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Jimmy Swaggart, *Catholicism & Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1986). [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Although many fundamentalists study Greek, in order to read the New Testament in the language of its composition, leading anti-Catholics are, as a rule, remarkably deficient in Greek and often base their arguments on elementary misunderstandings of the language. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ John Evangelist Walsh, *The Bones of St. Peter* (Garden City, N.Y.: Double-day, 1982). [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, viii. [Back to Text.](#)

- ⁹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 206. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 103. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 12. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 60. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 61. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 64. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 83. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 159-163. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 200. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 221, One such book is Peter M. J. Stravinskis, *The Catholic Response* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1985), which Swaggart lists as a newspaper article. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ One such page citation is to Newman, *Essay*, which is called in the text *The Development of the Christian Religion*. Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 164. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 36. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 200. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 53-54. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Barbara Nauer, "Catholic Calls Swaggart 'Holy Scourge' ", *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate*, 15 February 1985, 10A. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 7

- ¹ Last Days Ministries sends to inquirers a statement issued by Melody Green, Keith Green's widow. She explains the *Catholic Chronicles* have been withdrawn from distribution because "[w]e are aware of Catholics who have been wounded by these tracts. We are also aware of others who have adopted a critical, self-righteous attitude toward Catholics." [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ *Lumen Gentium*, 8. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, xii. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 8

¹ Jack Chick, *Smokescreens* (Chino, Calif.: Chick Publications, 1983), 5. [Back to Text.](#)

² Gary Metz, “Jack Chick’s Anti-Catholic Comic Book Is Exposed as a Fraud”, *Christianity Today*, 13 March 1981. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Information on Rivera is available from the Catholic League, 1100 West Wells Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 4-5. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 64. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Tony Alamo, going Chick and Rivera one better, claims the Vatican controls all the major news media. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 76-79. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 92. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 9

¹ See Paul Cardinal Taguchi, “The Study of Sacred Scripture”, reprinted in John Steinmueller, *The Sword of the Spirit* (Waco, Tex.: Stella Maris, 1978), 87-108. [Back to Text.](#)

² Curiously enough, so do exegetes of the historico-critical school, many of whom refuse to consider evidence extrinsic to the Bible when developing their theories. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ronald Knox, *In Soft Garments* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), 138. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Quoted in Lunn, *Third Day*, 28. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Arnold Lunn and C. E. M. Joad, *Is Christianity True?* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1933), 33-34. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ See John Henry Newman’s discussion of this point in his *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects* (London, 1891), 366. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ John Henry Newman, *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, ed. J. Derek Holmes and Robert Murray (Washington: Corpus Books, 1967), in. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Newman, *Inspiration*, 10-11, [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Newman, *Inspiration*, 51. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre &

Spottiswoode, 1952), 109. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Amy Wallace, David Wallechinsky, and Irving Wallace, *People's Almanac* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 1339. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² William G. Most, *Free from All Error* (Libertyville, 111.: Franciscan Marytown Press, 1985), 9-11. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 10

¹ *Dei Verbum*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

² Newman, *Inspiration*, 131n. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 11

¹ Gregory I (the Great), *In Ezechielem homiliae* 2, 4, 12. [Back to Text.](#)

² This refers to general revelation, which is to be believed by all. Private revelations have been given since apostolic times—Fatima is a modern example—but belief in particular private revelations is not necessary for salvation and is not incumbent on the faithful. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitoria* 23, 28. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ *Dei verbum*, 8. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II, 1, 7. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyatm*, 2, 15. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ The Semi-Arians having argued there was no important distinction between the two terms, which differ in spelling by only the smallest Greek letter, we have had preserved for us the saying that “there isn’t an iota of difference” between two closely related things. In fact, the distinction between *homoousios* and *homoiousios* was crucial. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Bill Jackson, *A Christian's Guide to Roman Catholicism* (Manteca, Calif.: Christians Evangelizing Catholics, n.d.), sec. 88. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Joseph Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1984), 1:7. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978), 12. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ From his tract *What about Christmas?* [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Newman, *Essay*, 369, Few fundamentalists complain that the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles coincided with a Canaanite vintage festival, much as Christmas did with the festival of Sol Invictus. Consistency has never been

fundamentalism's strong suit. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ From the March / April 1985 issue of *The Trinity Review*, the newsletter of the Trinity Foundation. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Newman, *Essay*, 27-28. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 12

¹ Newman, *Essay*, 369. [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 11. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Riverside, Calif.: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1966), 44. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 130. Woodrow forgets that Scripture uses the sun image for the Lord: "But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings: and you shall go forth, and shall leap like calves of the herd. And you shall trample down the wicked when they shall be ashes under the sole of your feet in the day that I do this, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:20-21). [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 130-131. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 13

¹ Kenneth E. Hagin, *The New Birth* (Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1983), 2-3. [Back to Text.](#)

² This seems to hold true for prisoners. Catholic inmates report that many of their fellows are attracted to fundamentalism because the "born-again" experience lets them avoid atoning for their sins. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Distributed by the Bible Baptist Church of Nashua, New Hampshire. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Ronald Knox, *St. Paul's Gospel* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950), 60. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Can Anyone Really Know for Sure?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Radio Bible Class, 1985), 4, 20-21. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 14

¹ Origen, *Commentarii in Romanes* 5, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

² John Chrysostom, *Catechises ad illuminandos* Apud Aug., Contra Iul. 1, 6, 21. [Back to Text.](#)

- ³ Cyprian, *Epistulae* 64 (59), 2, [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 15

¹ This was one of only two times we are told that God breathed on man, the other being when he made man a living soul (Gen 2:7). It emphasizes how important the establishment of the sacrament of penance was. [Back to Text](#).

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 8. [Back to Text](#).

³ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1, 13, 5. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ Origen, *In Psalmos homiliae* 2, 6. [Back to Text](#).

⁵ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text](#).

⁶ Aphraates, *Demonstrationes* 7, 3. [Back to Text](#).

⁷ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text](#).

⁸ Ambrose, *De paenitentia* 1, 2, 7. [Back to Text](#).

⁹ Leo I (the Great), *Epistulae* 108, 3. [Back to Text](#).

¹⁰ *The Forgiveness of Sins*, [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 16

¹ Boswell, *Johnson*, 1:376-77. [Back to Text](#).

² Augustine, *Decivitate Dei* 21, 13. [Back to Text](#).

³ Fundamentalists do not accept the inspiration of 2 Maccabees, of course, but they must admit it reflects the religious views of Jews shortly before New Testament times. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ Sandy Carson, "Is Purgatory Real?" *The Evangelist*, July 1984, 33. [Back to Text](#).

⁵ See the footnote to Colossians 1:24 in Knox's translation of the New Testament. [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 17

¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 117. [Back to Text](#).

² Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 15, 4. [Back to Text](#).

³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 120. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970), 421. [Back to Text](#).

- ⁵ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 25, 8. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁶ Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 36, 1. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁷ Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 32, 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁸ John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 327-47 passim. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁹ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistula ad Romanes* 4, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3, 3, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6, 14, 1. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Peter of Alexandria, *Depaenkenia* canon 9, [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Lactantius, *De mortibus penecutorum* 2, 5. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ Eusebius Pamphilius, *Chronican* ad an. Dom. 4.2, ad an. Dom. 68. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 118. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Walsh, *Bones*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ For an account of the locale, see Stanley L. Jaki, *And on This Rock* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria, 1978), 21-55 passim. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 106. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 106. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ Papias, *De expositione oracularum Dominicomm*, fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastics* 3, 39, 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics* (London: Bodiey Head, 1910), 67. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Henry T. Hudson, *Papal Power* (Welwyn, England: Evangelical, 1981). [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Hudson, *Power*, 2, [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Hudson, *Power*, 21, n. 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁵ Hudson, *Power*, 21, n. 3. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 18

- ¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 25. [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Cited in Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Radio Replies* (Rockford, 111.: TAN Books, 1979), 3:95. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ Cyprian, *Epistulae* 59 (55), 14. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Augustine, *Sermones* 131, 10. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 3:96. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ An example would be Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae vitae*. The encyclical may not have met the requirements of Vatican I, but the doctrine it enunciated is nevertheless infallibly taught. An infallible doctrine can be repeated in a document that is not itself infallible. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Joseph Zacchello, *Secrets of Romanism* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948), 10-11. There never were three Popes at once, of course. The problem was determining which of three claimants was the real Pope. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 100. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 101. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 102. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 102-3. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Martin Luther's name, when written in Latin, also tallies 666, as do hundreds of other names. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 233. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 236. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 238. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 236. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 241. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 239. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 243. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 250. [Back to Text.](#)

²² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 249. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952), 126-27. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Knox, *Difficulties*, 127. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 19

¹ Hugh Pope, *The Layman's New Testament* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), 333. [Back to Text.](#)

- ² Jimmy Swaggart, “The Mass—The Holy Eucharist”, *The Evangelist*, October 1985, 35. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ From his tracts *The Roman Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass* and *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁴ Brewer, *Sacrifice and Mystery*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁵ From his tract *Transubstantiation*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁶ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 186. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁷ Swaggart, “Mass”, 38. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁸ Ignatius, *Epistula ad Smyrnaeos* 6, 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁹ Justin Martyr, *Apologia prima pro Christianis* 65. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5, 2, 2; 4, 33, 7. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Origen, *In Exodum komiliae* 13, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Athanasius, *Sermo ad nuper baptizatos*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 22, 6. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ In the tract *The Mystery of the Eucharist*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Ambrose, *De sacramentis libri sex* 4, 4, 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Paschasius Radbertus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ Newman Eberhardt, *A Summary of Catholic History* (St. Louis: Herder, 1961), 1:464. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Eberhardt, *Summary*, 1:610. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ From his tract *The Holy Eucharist: Earing the Flesh of Deity*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ *Challenger*, October / November 1984. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ O’Brien, *Faith*, 215. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Personal correspondence to the author from Barbara Nauer. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Green, *Eucharist*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Nicholas Wiseman, *Lectures on the Real Presence*, 319. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁵ Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Eucharist Quizzes to a Street Preacher* (Rockford, 111.: TAN Books, 1976), 7-8. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 20

- ¹ Swaggart, “Mass”, 33-34. [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 175. [Back to Text.](#)

- ³ In his tract *The Sacrifice of the Mass*, [Back to Text](#).
- ⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 47. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁵ Rumble and Carty, *Quizzes*, 7. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁶ Lunn, *Third Day*, 103. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁷ O'Brien, *Faith*, 304. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 175. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹² Stravinskas, *Response*, 91. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹³ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 1:176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁴ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 125. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁵ Zacchello, *Secrets*, 69. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁶ Stravinskas, *Response*, 85. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁷ Jimmy Swaggart, *Roman Catholicism* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1986), 60. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁸ For instance, Bartholomew F. Brewer in his tract *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 4, 17, 5. [Back to Text](#).
- ²⁰ Clement of Rome, *Epistula ad Corinthios* 44, 4. [Back to Text](#).
- ²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 174. [Back to Text](#).
- ²² Ronald Knox, *The Window in the Wall* (London: Burns and Oates, 1956), 80. [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 21

¹ I once heard a priest recount the Miracle of the Sun, as he saw it as a boy from his home in the Azores. None of his relatives believed him when he explained what he witnessed in the sky. They presumed it was a childish fantasy. Weeks later the accounts from Fatima filtered in, and only then did his family understand that he had been granted a special privilege. This kind of story, when told by the protagonist himself, can be particularly effective in convincing people of the reality of saintly interventions, but few people, particularly outside the Church, ever have a chance to talk with an eyewitness to the supernatural. [Back to Text](#).

² John Henry Newman, *Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D. D., on his*

Recent Eirenicon (1566). [Back to Text.](#)

³ Orestes A. Brownson, *Saint Worship* (Paterson, NJ.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963), 40. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Brownson, *Worship*, 51-54. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 142-43. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Zacchello, *Secrets*, 129-30. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 22

¹ At least the New Jerusalem Bible, in its footnote to Luke 1:28, says that “you who enjoy God’s favour” means “you who have been and remain filled with the divine favour”. [Back to Text.](#)

² Rene Laurentin, *The Truth of Christmas beyond the Myths* (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede’s Publications, 1986), 18-19. [Back to Text.](#)

³ *Ineffabilis Deus* (Denz. 1641). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ William Wordsworth, “The Virgin”, *Complete Works of William Wordsworth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 7:316, [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Munificentissimus Deus* (Denz. 2333). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ *Fulgens Corona* 21. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Frank. Sheed, *The Church and I* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 46. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ M. L. Cozens, *A Handbook of Heresies* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1974), 45. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ *Summa theologiae* III, 26, 1. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ *Summa theologiae* III, 30, 1. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ This is an example of fundamentalists’ curious penchant for proof by (misapplied) statistics. Some of them base their belief in the inspiration of Scripture on the mathematical unlikelihood of a long series of Old Testament prophecies coming true. Unfortunately for them, such an argument has nothing to say about the inspiration of biblical books that do not contain prophecies. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Bill Jackson, *A Christian’s Guide to Roman Catholicism* (Manteca, Calif.: Christians Evangelizing Catholics, n.d.), sec. 36. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Jerome, *De perpetua virginitate Beatae Mariae adversus Helvidium*. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4, 22, 4; 3, 11,

1. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 23

¹ For a dispassionate account, see Fernand Hayward, *The Inquisition* (Staten Island, N. .: Alba House, 1965). [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 433. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Kevin Long, “The Spanish Inquisition: A Second Look”, *Faith & Reason*, Summer 1982, 59-60. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 1:218, [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Goethes Werke* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1867), 20:245. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ William Thomas Walsh, *Isabella of Spain* (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1930), 275; R. Trevor Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain: 1501—1621* (London: Macmillan, 1937), 14. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Henry C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper, 1887). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Elphege Vacandard, *L’Inquisition* (Paris, 1907), viii. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ G. G. Coulton and Arnold Lunn, *Is the Catholic Church Anti-Social?* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1946), 127. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Coulton and Lunn, *Anti-Social?* 1:04-12, 128, 132. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Coulton and Lunn, *Anti-Social?* 110. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), 40. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Only slightly less preposterous, Jimmy Swaggart claims “the Roman Catholic church murdered some *twenty million* people during the existence of the Inquisition.” *Catholicism*, 31. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ The present-day population of France, Spain, and Italy is about 150 million. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Inquisition”, 8:35. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies and Church Councils* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 130. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Donald Attwater, ed., *A Catholic Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 236. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 24

¹ Sheed and Ward, *Evidence*, 20. [Back to Text.](#)

² Frank Sheed, *Death into Life* (New York: Arena Lettres, 1977), 74. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), v-vi. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 422. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 515. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 25

¹ Not every apologetics book is useful in dealing with fundamentalists. Some are written more for the inquiring agnostic than for the believing Protestant, and even those that are not usually neglect fundamentalism's specific charges. Since these charges are often identical to ones leveled against the Church two generations ago, many of the most useful apologetics works are old. Distressingly few recent works about the Faith discuss problems in Church history or argue the foundation of doctrines—apparently because the authors think history is unimportant and doctrines are mutable. [Back to Text.](#)

² Editors of encyclopedias excepted, of course. [Back to Text.](#)

³ *Loraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ An example is *The Floating Admiral* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1931), contributors including Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, G. K. Chesterton, and Ronald Knox. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Bernard Orchard et al., eds., *A Catholic Commentary, on Holy Scripture* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1953). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Author of *The Layman's New Testament* (London: Sheed and Ward), 1934, which is particularly helpful in replying to verse-slinging. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Reginald C. Fuller et al., eds., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Nelson, 1969). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Raymond E. Brown et al., eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968). [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ William G. Most, *Free from All Error* (Libertyville, 111.: Franciscan Mary town Press, 1985). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ John Steinmueller, *A Companion to Scripture Studies* (New York:

Joseph F. Wagner, 1969). [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ John Steinmueller, *The Sword of the Spirit* (Waco, Tex.: Stella Maris, 1978). [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Hugh Pope, *English Versions.* [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1980). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Eberhardt, *Summary,* [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Fernand Mourret, *A History of the Catholic Church* (St. Louis: Herder, 1946). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Henri Daniel-Rops, *A History of the Church of Christ* (New York: Dutton, 1960). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Warren Carroll, *A History of Christendom* (Front Royal, Va.: Christendom College Press, 1985). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934, 1948). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1947). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ Eusebius Pamphilius, *The Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1975), cited in this book as *Historia ecclesiastica.* [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Joseph Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1984). [Back to Text.](#)

²² Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1983, 1986). [Back to Text.](#)

²³ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970, 1979). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books, 1974). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Newman, *Essay.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Sheed and Ward, *Evidence.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁷ In writing *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*, Frank Sheed was assisted by his wife, Maisie Ward. The portions cited in this book seem to have been written by Sheed. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁸ Rumble and Carty, *Replies.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁹ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, I:ix. [Back to Text.](#)

³⁰ Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday

Visitor, 1978). [Back to Text.](#)

³¹ Sheed, *Sanity*, ix. [Back to Text.](#)

³² Sheed, *Sanity*, 324-26. Also to be recommended is Sheed's *Theology for Beginners* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957), which covers much of the same ground from a different perspective. [Back to Text.](#)

³³ Frank Sheed, *To Know Christ Jesus* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1980). [Back to Text.](#)

³⁴ Fulton Sheen, *Life of Christ* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977). [Back to Text.](#)

³⁵ Sheen, *Life*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

³⁶ Romano Guardini, *The Lord* (Chicago: Regnery, 1954). [Back to Text.](#)

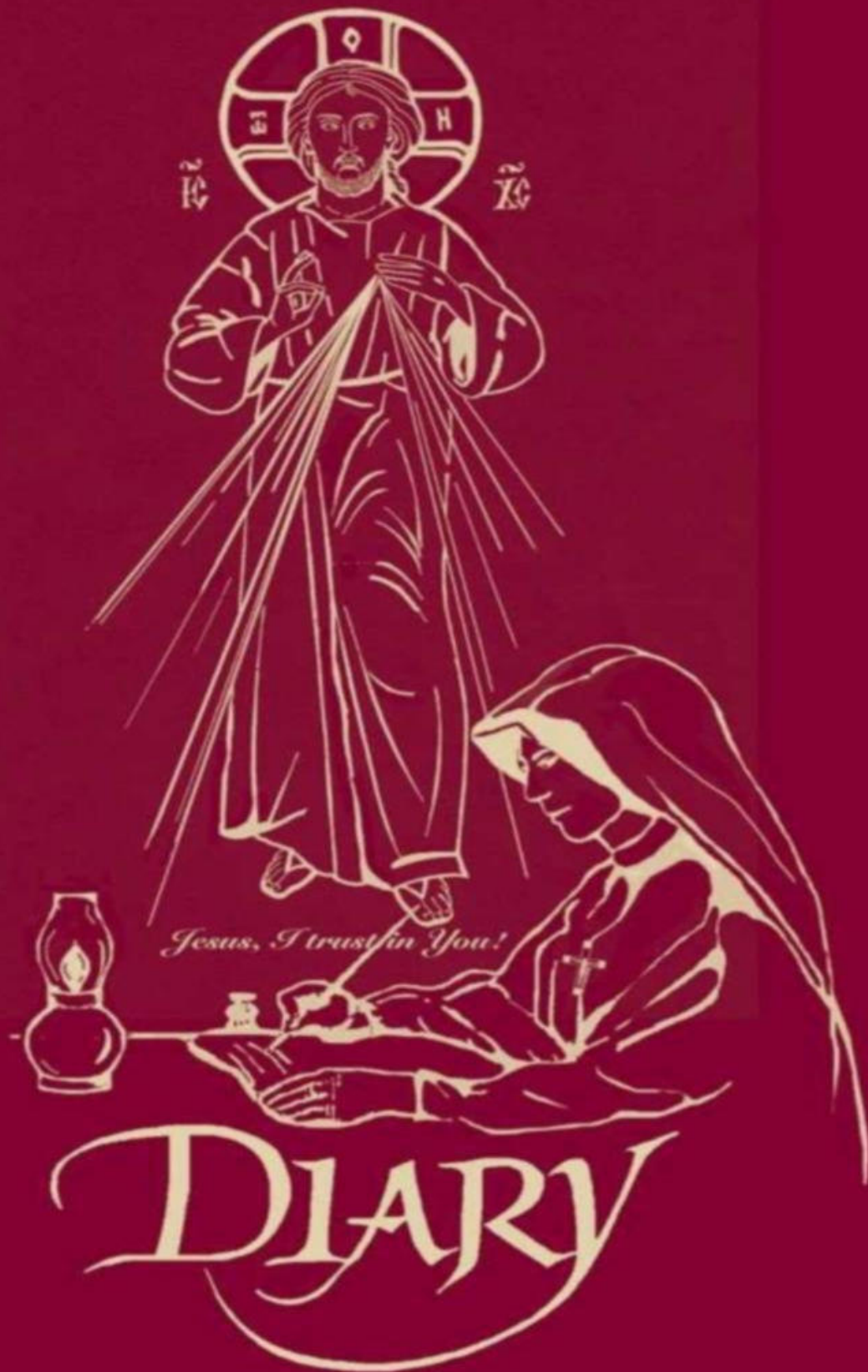
³⁷ Guardini, *Lord*, vi. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 26

¹ Hilaire Belloc, *Survivals and New Arrivals* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 20, 56. [Back to Text.](#)

² Joseph Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985), 118. [Back to Text.](#)

Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska



Divine Mercy in My Soul

Diary
of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska
Divine Mercy in My Soul

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Preface

The *Diary of [Saint Maria] Faustina* is the record of her life experience—the journey of her soul. She was graced by a special communion with God, and the *Diary* expresses her conviction that this communion ought to be the center of our lives. Since the 1940's, the Marians of the Immaculate Conception, St. Stanislaus Kostka Province, have shared this conviction and have undertaken the promulgation of God's mercy throughout the world, particularly as it has been proclaimed by [Saint] Faustina.

In 1979, convinced of the importance of the *Diary*, the Marians were instrumental in bringing it—in its rough typewritten form—out of Poland. We made the necessary corrections to the manuscript and published a critical Polish edition that has been promulgated throughout the world to Polish speaking people.

At the same time, we commissioned a couple in Poland, Adam and Danuta Pasicki, to translate the *Diary* into English. Once they had completed this first, literal translation we asked Archbishop George Pearce, S.M., to re-translate portions of it in accordance with proper English terminology for the various theological concepts and spiritual experiences referred to throughout the diary. Archbishop Pearce was supported in this second translation by Fathers George Kosicki, C.S.B., Gerald Farrell, M.M., Leo McCauley, S.J., and an Oblate, Francis Bagan, O. M. I.

When this text was completed, it was given to Father Seraphim Michalenko, M.I.C., who was Director of the Divine Mercy Department from 1979-1986. Together with Sister Sophia Michalenko, C.M.G.T., he carefully reviewed the translation, often referring back to the original Polish to ensure exactness of expression. Father Joseph Sielski, M.I.C., and Father Kazimierz Chwalek, M.I.C., were then asked to review the text, re-reading it for authentic agreement with the Polish.

Finally, in the first part of 1987, the text was returned to the Divine Mercy Department, [then] headed by Father George Kosicki, C.S.B. Through his efforts, the tireless work of Sister Sophia Michalenko, C.M.G.T., and the assistance of Vincent Flynn, the *Diary* was subjected to a complete editing, re-typing, and proofing process for clarity of expression and readability according to current English grammar and usage. The index, listing the main themes of the *Diary*, was compiled by Father Eugene Ozimek and developed by Fr. George Kosicki and Sister Sophia. The design, composition, and

mechanicals were then completed by Charles Parise and Pat Menatti, and the *Diary* was printed by the Marian Press at the Marian Helpers Center. To all involved with this work, we wish to express our deepest gratitude and the assurance of our prayers.

Since the Polish *Diary* is the official text, we have made every effort to be truly faithful to it, and to retain the various shades of meaning implied in the theological and spiritual terms used by [Saint] Faustina—a definite challenge, indeed! In translating the *Diary*, we dealt with the same kind of challenge that faces the translators of Sacred Scripture. Some terms allow for a variety of expressions even though the meanings are the same, and the final translation thus becomes a personal choice of style and expression on the part of the translator.

For the most part, the texts that have already been published in the popular devotional booklets are the same as those used in the *Diary*, though in some instances, there again may be slight differences of style and expression.

Special Features of this New English Edition

In the final editing process, inconsistencies of verb tense, capitalization, and punctuation were standardized as much as possible without losing [Saint] Faustina's unique style and powerful simplicity of expression. Our Lord's words to [Saint] Faustina were set in **bold type** for emphasis, while Our Lady's words were set in *italics*. The page numbers of [Saint] Faustina's original notebooks were also set in bold type, and paragraphs thought to be overly long or diversified in content were split into shorter paragraph units for readability.

The footnotes, too, have been reexamined, and additional clarifying notes have been added where necessary. Notes that were no longer pertinent, in light of changes incorporated into the English translation, were deleted; and, wherever possible, explanatory notes were placed in [square brackets] in the text itself to avoid unnecessary breaks in the reading.

Our deepest hope is that this *Diary* may truly be a vehicle of grace for all who read it, for in reading it we can see that the mercy of God lives forever. Above all, we hope that all people will be struck by the truth that **mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to God's mercy.**

May each one of you experience the power of the Blood and Water that poured out from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy, and may each of you find confidence and trust in this ever-present mercy of God!

Gratefully in the Lord,
Very Rev. Richard J. Drabik, MIC
Provincial Superior
Eden Hill, Stockbridge, Massachusetts
March 19, 1987

Original Preface to the Polish Edition, 1981

In presenting this edition of the *Diary of [Saint] Maria Faustina Kowalska* I am fully aware that I am introducing a document of Catholic mysticism of exceptional worth, not only for the Church in Poland, but also for the Universal Church. This publication is the critical edition, and thus reliable. It is the work of the Postulator of Sister Faustina, under the direction of the authority of the Archdiocese of Cracow.

The *Diary*, whose object is devotion to The Divine Mercy, has acquired tremendous interest lately for two reasons:

Firstly: The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in its revision more than two years ago [1978], withdrew the censures and reservations advanced earlier by the Holy See in relation to the writings of Sister Faustina. The withdrawal of the “Notification” caused the devotion to The Divine Mercy, as presented in the *Diary*, to grow in renewed vitality on all continents, as is evidenced by the numerous testimonies received by the Postulator and the Congregation of which Sister Faustina was a member.

Secondly: The recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, happily fixed the attention of the Church, and even of the secular world, on this most wonderful attribute of God and extraordinary aspect of the economy of salvation, which is The Divine Mercy.

A comprehensive study in order to indicate the affinity of ideas found in the *Diary of [Saint] Maria Faustina* and this encyclical (not to mention their probable interdependence) would be most welcome. These salient points certainly are numerous, for they draw their inspiration from the same source; namely, from the revelation of God and the teaching of Christ.

Furthermore, they come from the same spiritual environment, from Cracow, the city which, as far as I know, possesses the oldest church dedicated to the honor of The Divine Mercy. It is likewise necessary to stress that it was Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, the Archbishop of Cracow at that time, who made efforts to begin the Process of Beatification of Sister Faustina Kowalska and did inaugurate that process.

In this light, the *Diary of [Saint] Maria Faustina* took on exceptional meaning for Catholic spirituality; and that is why it was fitting to prepare a

credible edition, in order to prevent the distortion of the text by persons who perhaps are acting in good faith, but who are not adequately prepared for such work. Thus, publications containing differences and even contradictions, such as took place with the spiritual diary of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, *The Story of a Soul*, can be avoided.

The reader, after just a superficial skimming of the *Diary*, may be struck by the simplicity of the language and even by the spelling and stylistic errors, but he should not forget that the author of the *Diary* had but a limited elementary education. The theology alone which is found in the *Diary* awakens in the reader a conviction of its uniqueness; and if one considers the contrast between [Saint] Faustina's education and the loftiness of her theology, the contrast alone indicates the special influence of Divine Grace.

I would like to mention here my meeting with a wellknown contemporary mystic, Sister Speranza, who in Collevaenza, not far from Todi [Italy], founded the sanctuary of "The Most Merciful Love," the site of numerous pilgrimages. I asked Sister Speranza whether she had heard of the writings of Sister Faustina and what she thought of them. She answered me with simplicity: "The writings contain a wonderful teaching, but reading them one must remember that God speaks to philosophers in the language of philosophers and to simple souls in the language of the simple ones, and only to these last does He reveal truths hidden from the wise and prudent of this world."

To conclude this preface, permit me to mention yet one more personal recollection from the year 1952, when for the first time I took part in a solemn beatification ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica. After the festivity, I was asked by some person who also participated, "Who exactly was this blessed one?" The question embarrassed me very much, because at the moment I could not recall who those blessed were, although I knew full well that the real purpose of a beatification is to present to the People of God a model to consider and imitate in their lives.

Among the candidates for beatification and canonization Poland has presently two persons familiar to the whole world which knows who they are, what they accomplished in their lifetime and what sort of message their lives proclaim. They are Blessed [now Saint] Maximilian Kolbe, the martyr of love, and Sister [now Saint] Faustina Kowalska, the Apostle of The Divine Mercy.

Rome, December 20, 1980

+ Andrew M. Deskur
Titular Archbishop of Tene

Introduction

1. **Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska**, known today the world over as the “Apostle of The Divine Mercy,” is numbered by theologians among the outstanding mystics of the Church.

She was the third of ten children born into a poor and pious peasant family in Glogowiec, a village in the heart of Poland. At her baptism in the nearby Parish Church of Swinice Warckie she was given the name “Helena.” From childhood she distinguished herself by her piety, love of prayer, industriousness and obedience as well as by her great sensitivity to human misery. She had hardly three years of schooling, and at the age of fourteen she left the family hearth to help her parents and to earn her own livelihood serving as a domestic in the nearby cities of Aleksandrów and Lodz.

When she was only seven (two years before her First Holy Communion), Helen already sensed in her soul the call to embrace the religious life. When later she made her desire known to her parents, they categorically did not acquiesce in her entering a convent. Because of this situation Helen strove to stifle this divine call within her. Pressed on, however, by a vision of the suffering Christ and by the words of His reproach: “How long shall I put up with you and how long will you keep putting Me off?” (*Diary*, 9), she began to search for a convent to join. She knocked on many a convent door, but nowhere was she accepted. Finally on August 1, 1925, Helen crossed the threshold of the cloister in the convent of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy on Zytnia Street in Warsaw. In her *Diary* she declared: “It seemed to me that I had stepped into the life of Paradise. A single prayer was bursting forth from my heart, one of thanksgiving” (*Diary*, 17).

After a few weeks she experienced nonetheless a strong temptation to transfer to a different congregation in which there would be more time for prayer. It was then the Lord Jesus, manifesting to her His wounded and tortured face, said: “It is you who will cause Me this pain if you leave this convent. It is to this place that I called you and nowhere else, and [it is here] I have prepared many graces for you” (*Diary*, 19).

Upon her entrance to the Congregation Helen received the name Sr. Maria Faustina. Her novitiate she spent in Cracow, and there, in the presence of Bishop Stanislaus Rospond, she pronounced her first religious vows, and five years later, she made her perpetual profession of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. She was assigned to work in a number of the

Congregation's houses, but for a longer period in those of Cracow, Plock and Vilnius, fulfilling the duties of cook, gardener and doorkeeper.

To all external appearances nothing betrayed her extraordinarily rich mystical life. She zealously went about her duties, she faithfully observed all the religious rules, she was recollected and kept silent, all the while being natural, cheerful, full of kindness and of unselfish love of neighbor.

Her entire life was concentrated on constant striving for an even fuller union with God and on self-sacrificing cooperation with Jesus in the work of saving souls. "My Jesus" — she avowed in her *Diary* — "You know that from my earliest years I have wanted to become a great saint; that is to say, I have wanted to love You with a love so great that there would be no soul who has hitherto loved You so" (*Diary*, 1372).

It is her *Diary* that reveals to us the depths of her spiritual life. An attentive reading of these records offers a picture of the high degree of her soul's union with God — the great extent of God's company keeping with her soul, as well as her efforts and struggles on the way to Christian perfection. The Lord endowed her with great graces — with the gift of contemplation, with a deep knowledge of the mystery of the mercy of God, with visions, revelations, the hidden stigmata, with the gift of prophecy and of reading into human souls, and also with the rare gift of mystical espousals. As lavishly gifted as she was, this is what she wrote: "Neither graces, nor revelations, nor raptures, nor gifts granted to a soul make it perfect, but rather the intimate union of the soul with God. ... My sanctity and perfection is based upon the close union of my will with the will of God" (*Diary*, 1107).

The austere lifestyle and exhausting fasts that she imposed upon herself even before joining the Congregation, weakened her organism to such an extent that already during her postulanship it became necessary to send her to Skolimów near Warsaw to restore her to health. Towards the end of her first year of novitiate, she was visited by unusually painful mystical experiences of the so-called dark night, and later by the spiritual and moral sufferings related to the accomplishment of the mission she was receiving from Christ the Lord. [St.] Faustina laid down her life in sacrifice for sinners and on this account she also sustained diverse sufferings, in order by means of them to come to the aid of their souls. During the last years of her life, inner sufferings of the so-called "passive night" of the soul and bodily diseases grew in intensity. The spreading tuberculosis attacked her lungs and alimentary canal. For this reason, twice she underwent several months'

treatment in the hospital on Pradnik Street in Cracow.

Physically ravaged, but fully mature spiritually, she died in the opinion of sanctity, mystically united with God, on October 5, 1938, hardly 33 years old, having been a religious for 13 years. Her mortal remains were laid to rest in the common tomb in the convent's cemetery in Cracow-Lagiewniki. In 1966, during the informative process towards Sister Faustina's beatification, they were transferred to the convent chapel.

To this simple, uneducated, but courageous woman religious, who trusted Him without limit, Our Lord Jesus consigned the great mission to proclaim His message of mercy directed to the whole world: **"Today,"** He told her, **"I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to My merciful Heart"** (*Diary*, 1588). **"You are the secretary of My mercy; I have chosen you for that office in this and the next life"** (*Diary*, 1605) ... **"to make known to souls the great mercy that I have for them, and to exhort them to trust in the bottomless depth of My mercy"** (*Diary*, 1567).

2. ST. FAUSTINA'S MISSION. In short, her mission consists in reminding us of the immemorial, but seemingly forgotten, truths of our faith about God's merciful love for men, and in conveying to us new forms of devotion to The Divine Mercy, the practice of which is to lead to the revival of the spiritual life in the spirit of Christian trust and mercy.

St. Faustina's *Diary*, which Jesus Christ ordered her to keep during the last four years of her life, is a kind of journal in which the author recorded current or retrospective events related primarily to the "encounters" of her soul with God. A rigorous, scholarly analysis of her notebooks was necessary to extract from them everything which is considered essential to her mission.

This work was accomplished by an eminent and highly esteemed theologian, the Rev. Professor, Ignacy Rozycki. A brief summary of his scholarly and theological work is published under the title *The Divine Mercy: Basic Characteristics of the Divine Mercy Devotion*.

Compared to this important theological work, all previous publications on the Divine Mercy devotion, related to us by St. Faustina, seem to be concerned only with some of its elements or with more secondary matters. For example, in some instances, emphasis is placed on the Litany or the Novena to The Divine Mercy, leaving aside the Hour of Mercy.

Fr. Rozycki draws our attention to this fact by saying: "Before we

acquaint ourselves with the specific elements of the Divine Mercy devotion, we need to notice that among them we won't find any of the well-known or beloved novenas or litanies."

The basis for selecting these, and not other, prayers or religious practices, as the new forms of the Divine Mercy devotion, are the specified promises attached to them, which the Lord Jesus promised to fulfill on the condition of one's trust in God's goodness and of mercy towards one's neighbors. Rev Rozycki points out that there are five elements of the devotion to The Divine Mercy.

a. The Image of the Merciful Jesus. Its pattern was revealed in the vision St. Faustina had on February 22, 1931, in her convent cell at Plock. "In the evening, when I was in my cell," she recorded in the *Diary*, "I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside from at breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. ... After a while, Jesus said to me, '**Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You**'" (*Diary*, 47). "**I want this image ... to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy**" (*Diary*, 49).

For this reason, the content of this image is closely related to the liturgy of that Sunday. On this day, the Church reads the Gospel according to St. John about the risen Christ appearing in the Upper Room and about the institution of the Sacrament of Penance (Jn 20:19-29). Consequently, this image represents the Savior risen from the dead who brings peace to people by means of the forgiveness of sins at the price of His passion and death on the cross.

The rays of blood and water that flow from the Heart that was pierced by a spear (not visible on the image) and the scars caused by the wounds of crucifixion call to mind the events of Good Friday (Jn 19:17-18; 33-37). The Image of the Merciful Savior, therefore, combines the two Gospel events that best bespeak the fullness of God's love for mankind.

The two rays are a distinctive feature of this image of Christ. The Lord Jesus, when asked about their meaning, explained: "The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls. ... Happy is the one who will dwell in their shelter"

(*Diary*, 299). The Sacraments of Baptism and Penance purify the soul, and the Eucharist most abundantly nourishes it. Thus, the two rays signify the Holy Sacraments and all the graces of the Holy Spirit, whose biblical symbol is water, as well as the New Covenant of God with men in the Blood of Christ.

The image of the Merciful Jesus is often called the “Image of The Divine Mercy,” which is appropriate, since it is precisely in Christ’s Paschal Mystery that God’s love for humankind was most explicitly revealed.

The image not only represents The Divine Mercy, but also serves as a sign that is to recall the Christian obligation of trust in God and of active love toward neighbor. By Christ’s will the image bears a signature comprised of these words: “Jesus, I trust in You.” **“This image,”** Jesus also declared, **“is to be a reminder of the demands of My mercy, because even the strongest faith is of no avail without works”** (*Diary*, 742).

To the veneration of the image understood in this way, as relying upon the Christian attitude of trust and mercy, Our Lord attached special promises, namely, of eternal salvation, of great progress in the way of Christian perfection, of the grace of a happy death, and of all other possible graces which people will ask of Him with trust: **“By means of this Image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so let every soul have access to it”** (*Diary*, 570).

b. The Feast of The Divine Mercy. It ranks highest among all the elements of The Divine Mercy devotion revealed to [St.] Faustina. Its institution was requested by the Lord Jesus for the first time in Plock, in 1931, while He was communicating His will regarding the painting of the Image: **“I desire that there be a Feast of Mercy. I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy”** (*Diary*, 49).

The choice of the first Sunday after Easter for the Feast of Mercy has a very deep theological significance, which points to the close relationship between the Paschal Mystery of the Redemption and the mystery of The Divine Mercy. This integral relationship is further emphasized by the Novena of Chaplets to The Divine Mercy which begins on Good Friday as a preparation for the Feast.

This feast is not only a day in particular for worshipping God in His mystery of mercy, but also a time of grace for all people. The Lord Jesus

said: **“I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners”** (*Diary*, 699). **“Souls perish in spite of My bitter Passion. I am giving them the last hope of salvation, that is, recourse to My Mercy. If they will not adore My mercy, they will perish for all eternity”** (cf. *Diary*, 965, 998).

The greatness of this feast is measured by the measure of extraordinary promises that the Lord attached to this feast: Jesus said **“... whoever approaches the Fount of Life on this day will be granted complete remission of sins and punishment”** (*Diary*, 300), and also, **“On this day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. ... Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet”** (*Diary*, 699).

To profit from those great gifts we must fulfill the conditions of the Divine Mercy devotion (trust in God’s goodness and active love toward neighbor), be in the state of sanctifying grace — having gone to Holy Confession, and worthily receive Holy Communion. Jesus explained: **“No soul will be justified until it turns with confidence to My mercy; and this is why the first Sunday after Easter is to be the Feast of Mercy, and on that day, priests are to tell everyone about My great and unfathomable mercy”** (*Diary*, 570).

c. The Chaplet of The Divine Mercy. This Chaplet was dictated to Sr. Faustina by the Lord Jesus Himself in Vilnius on September 13-14, 1935, as a prayer of atonement and for the appeasement of God’s wrath (see *Diary*, 474-476).

Those who recite this Chaplet offer to God the Father “the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity,” of Jesus Christ in atonement for their sins, the sins of their loved ones, and those of the entire world. By uniting themselves with the sacrifice of Jesus, they appeal to the great love that our Heavenly Father has for His Son and, in Him, for all humanity.

By means of this prayer, the petitioners request “mercy on us and on the whole world,” and by so doing, they perform a work of mercy. If the faithful add to this the foundation of trust and fulfill the conditions regarding every good prayer (humility, perseverance, matters in conformity with God’s will), they can expect the fulfillment of Christ’s promises which are particularly related to the hour of death: the grace of conversion and a peaceful death.

Not only will the people who say the Chaplet receive these graces, but also the dying at whose side others will recite this prayer. The Lord said: **“When this chaplet is said by the bedside of a dying person, God’s anger is placated, unfathomable mercy envelops the soul”** (*Diary*, 811). The general promise says: **“It pleases Me to grant everything they ask of Me by saying the chaplet”** (*Diary*, 1541) **“... if what you ask for is compatible with My will”** (*Diary*, 1731). For, anything that is not compatible with God’s will is not good for people, especially for their eternal happiness.

On a different occasion, Jesus said: **“... by saying the Chaplet you are bringing humankind closer to Me”** (*Diary*, 929). and again: **“The souls that say this chaplet will be embraced by My mercy during their lifetime and especially at the hour of their death”** (*Diary*, 754).

d. The Hour of Mercy. In October, 1937, in Cracow, under circumstances that are not fully described by [St.] Faustina, the Lord Jesus recommended that she honor the hour of His death: **“... as often as you hear the clock strike the third hour, immerse yourself completely in My mercy, adoring and glorifying it; invoke its omnipotence for the whole world, and particularly for poor sinners; for at that moment mercy was opened wide for every soul”** (*Diary*, 1572).

The Lord Jesus also determined the prayers that are appropriate for this form of the Divine Mercy devotion: **“... try your best to make the Stations of the Cross in this hour, provided that your duties permit it; and if you are not able to make the Stations of the Cross, then at least step into the chapel for a moment and adore, in the Blessed Sacrament, My Heart, which is full of mercy; and should you be unable to step into the chapel, immerse yourself in prayer there where you happen to be, if only for a very brief instant”** (*Diary*, 1572).

Prof. Rozycki enumerates three conditions for prayers offered in this hour to be granted:

1. They are to be addressed to Jesus.
2. They are to be said at three o’clock in the afternoon.
3. They are to appeal to the value and merits of Christ’s Passion.

The Lord Jesus promised: **“In this hour you can obtain everything for yourself and for others for the asking; it was the hour of grace for the whole world — mercy triumphed over justice”** (*Diary*, 1572).

e. Spreading the honor of The Divine Mercy. In discussing the essential elements of the Divine Mercy devotion, Rev. Rozycki also mentions the spreading of the honor of The Divine Mercy as one of them since certain promises of Christ are related to this as well: **“Souls who spread the honor of My mercy I shield through their entire life as a tender mother her infant, and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the Merciful Savior”** (*Diary*, 1075).

The essence of The Divine Mercy devotion is found in the Christian attitude of trust in God and of an active love toward neighbor. The Lord Jesus said: **“I desire trust from My creatures”** (*Diary*, 1059), and He expects them to exercise mercy through deeds, words, and prayers. And further: **“You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it”** (*Diary*, 742). Christ wants those who worship Him to perform at least one act of love of neighbor in the course of each day.

The spreading of the honor of The Divine Mercy does not require many words, but always the Christian attitude of faith, of trust in God, and of becoming ever more merciful. In her lifetime St. Faustina gave the example of just such apostolic work.

f. The Divine Mercy devotion aims at the renewal of religious life in the Church in the spirit of Christian trust and mercy. It is in this context that the idea of the “new congregation” of which we read in the *Diary*’s pages should be considered. This desire of Christ matured gradually in Sr. Faustina’s own thinking, and underwent a certain evolution — from a strictly contemplative order all the way to a movement which is made up also of active congregations (male and female) and of lay people.

This great, supranational community of people is one family, which is being united, first of all, by God in the mystery of His mercy, and secondly, by people’s longing, both, to reflect that mercy in their own hearts and works, and for God’s glory to be reflected in all souls. It is a community of people who in different ways, depending upon their state in life and vocation (priestly, religious, lay), live by the Gospel ideal of trust and mercy, proclaim the incomprehensible mystery of God’s mercy by their life and words, and obtain Divine Mercy for the world with their entreaties.

St. Faustina’s mission finds deep justification in Holy Scripture and documents of the Church; it superbly corresponds especially with the

encyclical *Dives in misericordia (Rich in mercy) of the Holy Father, John Paul II.*

3. REMARKS REGARDING THE THIRD ENGLISH EDITION OF ST. FAUSTINA'S DIARY.

The former scientific study by Fr. George Mrowczynski concerning the composition of Saint Faustina's *Diary*, that served as an introduction to its last two editions, has been replaced with the present text, the aim of which is to bring the reader closer to the personality of the author herself and her mission, as an aid to understanding the *Diary*.

For the greater glory of The Divine Mercy!

Sr. M. Elizabeth Siepak, ZMBM
Cracow, December of 1991

Chronology of Events

*in The Life of Saint Maria Faustina—Helen Kowalska
of The Congregation of
The Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy*

August 25, 1905 — Helen Kowalska is born in the village of Glogowiec, Turek County, Lodz Province, Poland (Parish records of births).

August 27, 1905 — She is baptised in St. Casimir Church, Swinice Warckie, Turek County, by the pastor, Rev. Joseph Chodynski. She receives the name of Helen. (Acts of the Parish in Swinice).

1912 — At the age of seven, Helen hears for the first time a voice in her soul, calling her to a more perfect way of life (*Diary I:3*).

1914 — She receives First Holy Communion from the hands of her pastor, Rev. Pawlowski (Acts of the Parish in Swinice).

November 1917 — She begins her primary education in Swinice (Minutes from Zbiorczej Szkoły Gminnej w Swinicach Warckich, April 6, 1976).

1919 — At the age of 14, Helen begins to work for the Bryszewski family in Aleksandrow, near Lodz, in order to help her parents (Memoirs of her mother, Marianne Kowalska).

October 30, 1921 — She receives the Sacrament of Confirmation in Alexandrow, near Lodz, from Bishop Vincent Tymieniecki.

1922 — After working for a year for the Bryszewski family, she returns home and announces that she wishes to enter a convent. Her parents decidedly oppose this move (*Diary I:4*; Memoirs of her mother).

Autumn 1922 — Helen leaves for Lodz to look for more work in order to help her parents. She works for three tertiaries (Memoirs of her mother, p. 5; Memoirs of Stanislava Rapacka).

February 2, 1923 — Referred by an employment agency, she goes to work for Marcianne Sadowska, the owner of a store on 29 Abramowski St., Lodz, where she remains until July 1, 1924 (Memoirs of Mrs. Sadowska, p. 2).

July 1924 — Helen goes to Warsaw to enter a convent there (Memoirs of

Mother General Michael Moraczewska, handwritten, p. 1; *Diary I:4*).

She applies at the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy at 3/9 Zytnia Street in Warsaw. The superior assesses her as “no one special” and puts her to the test, telling her to go to work so she can pay for her wardrobe (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 1; Memoirs of Sister Borgia, p. 1).

Summer 1924 — Helen goes to work as a domestic for Aldona Lipszyc, at Ostrowek, Klembow County, near Warsaw (Memoirs of A. Lipszyc, p. 1).

August 1, 1925 — She again applies to the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, and this time she is accepted (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 2; Memoirs of Sister Borgia, p. 1; *Diary I:6*).

Circa Helen wants to leave the Congregation

August 22, 1925 — to enter a stricter order. She feels that there is too little time for prayer in the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 2; *Diary I:6*).

August 1925 — The superior sends her to Skolimow, a vacation house of the Congregation, near Warsaw, to regain her strength (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 2).

January 23, 1926 — She leaves for the Novitiate in Cracow to complete her postulancy period, make a retreat, and receive the veil (Memoirs of Sister Borgia, p. 1; *Diary I: 7*).

April 30, 1926 — After an eight-day retreat, she receives her habit and her name in religion. From now on Helen will bear the name Sister Maria Faustina (Cracow Chron. III:177; Memoirs of Sister Clemens).

June 20, 1926 — An administrative change of the Directress of Novices influences Sister Faustina’s spiritual formation (Cracow Chron. III:179).

April 3, 1927 — Sister Faustina experiences the spiritual dark night. The trial lasts almost to the end of the Novitiate. Mother Directress, Mary Joseph Brzoza, encourages her, excuses her from formal spiritual exercises, and urges her to great fidelity to God (*Diary I:8*).

April 16, 1928 — On Good Friday, the flame of Divine Love encompasses the suffering novice. She forgets past sufferings, and she more clearly recognizes how much Christ suffered for her (*Diary I:10*).

April 20, 1928 — In the evening Sister Faustina, together with other sisters, begins the retreat before taking temporary vows (Chron. III:203; Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 3; *Diary* I: 11).

April 30, 1928 — Sister Faustina makes her first profession of temporary vows, which she will renew each year for five years, until the moment when she will make her perpetual vows (Cracow Chron. III:203; Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 3).

Dec. 6-10, 1928 — At the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, Mother Michael Moraczewska is elected Mother General (Cracow Chron. III:210).

[Mother Michael will be Superior throughout Sister Faustina's life, In difficult moments she will be her help and comfort. Into her hands Sister Faustina will place her perpetual vows. Before death she will ask pardon of the whole Congregation through Mother's hands for all the failings committed during her entire religious life (Memoirs of Mother Michael, pp. 5, 11, 12).]

October 31, 1928 — Sister Faustina leaves for 3/9 Zytnia Street, Warsaw, where she is assigned to work in the kitchen (Cracow Chron. III:212).

February 21, 1929 — She leaves for Vilnius to substitute for a sister going for her third probation (Vilnius Chron. I:9).

April 11, 1929 — By morning train, she leaves Vilnius to return to Warsaw (Vil. Chron. I:21).

June 1929 — She is assigned to work in a newly-formed house on Hetmanska Street, Warsaw (Memoirs of Sisters).

After a few months, Sister Faustina returns to the house on 3/9 Zytnia Street. Meanwhile the students, (wards) with whom she worked, promise that they will follow her there (Memoirs of Sisters).

July 7, 1929 — For a short while, Sister Faustina is sent to a house of the Congregation in Kiekrz near Poznan, to substitute for an ailing sister in the kitchen (Memoirs of Sister Xavier; letter of July 6 with no year, placed in the memoirs; *Diary* I:74).

October 1929 — She is already back in Warsaw, as evidenced by a letter to

Sister Justine, dated October 20, 1929. (Letters #25:66).

May-June 1930 — Assigned to the house of the Congregation in Plock, Sister Faustina works there by turns in the bakery, the kitchen, and the bakery store (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 3).

During her stay in Plock (from June 1930 to November 1932), she spends some time in Biala (a house of the Congregation situated in a village about 10 kilometers from Plock).

[Because the chronicles of Warsaw and Plock were ruined during World War II, it is difficult to fully ascertain the dates of her stay in these homes.]

A letter to Sister Justine Golofit, dated December 17, 1930, witnesses to the fact that Sister Faustina is, at that time, still in Biala (Letters #26:68).

February 22, 1931 — Sister Faustina sees a vision of the Lord Jesus, who tells her to paint an image according to the pattern she sees (*Diary* I: 18; Memoirs of Mother p. 4).

November 1932 — She arrives in Warsaw for the Third Probation, which the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy make before taking perpetual vows (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 5; *Diary* I:84).

Before beginning the Third Probation, she goes to Walendow to make a retreat (Memoirs of Sister Seraphina Kukulska; *Diary* I:84).

December 1, 1932 — Together with other sisters she begins the Third Probation under the direction of Sister Margaret Gimbutt (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 5; *Diary* I:89).

The Third Probation in this Congregation lasts for five months. During this time, Sister Faustina works in the vestry, helping Sister Suzanne Tokarski (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 5; Memoirs of Sister Suzanne; *Diary* I:89).

March 1933 — Sister Faustina's younger sister, Wanda, visits her (*Diary* I:97).

April 18, 1933 — With other sisters, Sister Faustina goes to Cracow to make an eight-day retreat and her profession of perpetual vows (Cracow Chron. IV:8).

April 21, 1933 — The eight-day retreat begins under the direction of Father

Wojnar, S.J. (Cracow Chron. IV:8; *Diary* I: 102).

May 1, 1933 — Sister Faustina makes her perpetual vows. The celebrant for this ceremony is Bishop Stanislaus Rospond.

After the vows, Sister Faustina remains in Cracow for another month (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 5; Cracow Chron. IV:8; *Diary* I: 114).

May 25, 1933 — She leaves for Vilnius (Vil. Chron., p. 178). [The chronicle notes: “Sister Faustina, who made her profession of perpetual vows in Cracow, arrived Thursday evening, by train.”]

January 2, 1934 — Sister Faustina goes for the first time to the artist Kazimirowski, who is to paint the image of The Divine Mercy (Memoirs of Rev. Sopocko, p. 1; Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 6; *Diary* II:240).

March 29, 1934 — She offers herself for sinners, especially for those souls who have lost trust in The Divine Mercy (*Diary* I: 133).

June 1934 — The painting of the image of The Divine Mercy, executed by artist E. Kazimirowski under the guidance of Sister Faustina, is completed. Sister Faustina cries because the image of the Lord Jesus is not as beautiful as she had seen Him (Memoirs of Rev. Sopocko, p. 1; *Diary* I: 134).

July 26, 1934 — Sister Faustina lies sick—with a cold (Vil. Chron., p. 223).

July 28, 1934 — She begins to write the *Diary* again.

August 12, 1934 — She becomes gravely ill. Dr. Maciejewska is summoned along with Father Sopocko, who administers the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick to her (Vil. Chron., p. 226).

August 13, 1934 — Her health improves (Vil. Chron., p. 226).

October 26, 1934 — Walking with the students from the garden to supper (10 minutes before 6:00 p.m.), Sister Faustina sees the Lord Jesus above the chapel in Vilnius in the same way as she saw Him in Plock; that is, with the pale and red rays. The rays envelop the chapel of the Congregation and the infirmary of the students, and then they spread out over the whole world (Archives — Sister Faustina documents).

February 15, 1935 — Sister Faustina receives news of her seriously ill mother and leaves immediately that evening for her home village of

Glogowiec, near Lodz (Vil. Chron., p. 261; *Diary* I:165-169).

After leaving her home, Sister Faustina stops in Warsaw to see Mother General, Michael Moraczewska, and her former Directress, Sister Mary Joseph Brzoza. A few days later she returns to Vilnius (*Diary* I: 169).

[The Vilnius Chronicle does not note the date of her return.]

March 4, 1935 — Sister Petronilla and Sister Faustina go by wagon to the market held annually on St. Casimir's Feast Day, for tools and items needed by the house (Vil. Chron., p. 264).

September 29, 1935 — Sister Faustina accompanies some of the other sisters to the Church of St. Michael for the Forty-Hour Devotions (Vil. Chron., p. 302).

October 19, 1935 — Sister Antonina and Sister Faustina leave for an eight-day retreat in Cracow (Vil. Chron., p. 307; Cracow Chron. IV:49).

November 4, 1935 — In the evening, Sister Faustina returns to Vilnius from the retreat (Vil. Chron., p. 311).

January 8, 1936 — She pays a visit to Bishop Jalbrzykowski and announces to him that the Lord Jesus is demanding the founding of a new congregation (*Diary* II:50).

March 17, 1936 — Sister Borgia Tichy, Superior of the house in Vilnius receives information from Mother General of the change of assignment for Sister Faustina from Vilnius to Walendow (Vil. Chron., p. 337).

March 19, 1936 — Sister Borgia confers with Archbishop Jalbrzykowski concerning Sister Faustina (Vil. Chron., p. 338).

March 21, 1936 — Sister Faustina takes the morning train from Vilnius to Warsaw (Vil. Chron., p. 338), and remains in Warsaw for a few days (*Diary* II:90).

March 25, 1936 — She arrives in Walendow—a country house of the Congregation, 20 km from Warsaw. The sisters welcome her joyfully and sincerely (Memoirs; *Diary* II:91).

April 1936 — After a few weeks, she is assigned to another country home, 1 km from Walendow, a place called Derdy (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p.

8).

This home is situated in a forested area, and Sister Faustina, enchanted with its natural beauty, writes of her joy to Fr. Sopocko in a letter dated May 10, 1936 (Letters #3:5).

May 11, 1936 — In company with Sister Edmund Sekul, she leaves Derdy for a permanent stay in Cracow (Cracow Chron. IV:60), where she works first in the garden and then as gatekeeper (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 8).

June 19, 1936 — With some of the sisters, she takes part in a procession in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the Jesuit house on 26 Kopernik Street (Cracow Chron. IV:62; *Diary* II: 111).

September 14, 1936 — Archbishop Jalbrzykowski, on his way to Tarnow, visits the convent at Cracow and spends a few minutes in conversation with Sister Faustina (Cracow Chron. IV:67; *Diary* II: 133; Memoirs of Sister Felicia and Sister Irene).

September 19, 1936 — Sister Faustina is given a physical examination at the hospital in Pradnik (*Diary* II: 133-134).

October 20, 1936 — In Cracow, she makes an eight-day retreat directed by Father Wojton, S.J. (Cracow Chron. IV:70; *Diary* II: 153).

December 9, 1936 — For health reasons, the superiors send Sister Faustina to the hospital in Pradnik, a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients in Cracow (Cracow Chron. IV:74; *Diary* II: 198).

December 13, 1936 — Sister Faustina confesses to the Lord Jesus (*Diary* II: 207).

December 24, 1936 — With the doctor's permission she returns to the convent for the Christmas holidays (Cracow Chron. IV:74; *Diary* II:226).

December 27, 1936 — She returns to the hospital in Pradnik for further treatment (*Diary* II:230).

March 27, 1937 — She comes back from Pradnik, her health significantly improved (Cracow Chron. IV: 82; *Diary* III: 18).

April 13, 1937 — Her health becomes so much worse that she is forced to remain in bed (*Diary* III:22-23).

April 14, 1937 — Fatigued from sickness, she asks the Lord Jesus for health, and is heard (*Diary* III:23).

April 23, 1937 — During an eight-day retreat starting on April 20 in the Cracow convent, Sister Faustina takes this opportunity to make her three-day retreat (Cracow Chron. IV:82; *Diary* III:26).

April 29, 1937 — After the retreat, she converses with her former Directress of Novices, Sister Mary Joseph, who made her retreat in Cracow (*Diary* III:29-30).

May 4, 1937 — Sister Faustina receives permission from Mother General Michael Moraczewska to leave the Congregation (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 9; *Diary* III: 30-31).

July 20, 1937 — She learns that she is going to be sent to a house of the Congregation at Rabka (*Diary* III:54).

[The Chronicle makes no mention of this; however, it notes that the Superior went to Rabka for two days, which could have had some connection with Sister Faustina's departure (Cracow Chron. IV:88 — dated July 19; Memoirs of Sister Irene).]

July 29, 1937 — Sister Faustina leaves for Rabka (*Diary* III:54-55; Memoirs).

August 10, 1937 — She finds that the climate at Rabka does not agree with her, but makes her feel more ill, so she returns to Cracow (*Diary* IV:4).

August 12, 1937 — Father Sopocko stops at the convent in Cracow and spends some time with Sister Faustina (Memoirs of Sister Felicia; *Diary* IV:4-5).

August 25, 1937 — Father Sopocko spends a few days in Cracow. Sister Faustina is happy because she is anxious to see him (*Diary* IV: 16).

August 29, 1937 — She receives permission to speak at length with Father Sopocko (*Diary* IV: 17).

[The Chronicles make no mention of this.]

September 6, 1937 — Due to increasing ill health, her assignment is changed from gardener to gatekeeper (Memoirs of Mother Michael, p. 10;

Diary IV:25).

September 19, 1937 — Her brother Stanley visits her (*Diary* IV:40).

September 27, 1937 — Sister Faustina and Sister Irene Krzyzanowska, Superior of the house, go to the printer to settle the matter of having some holy cards of the image of The Divine Mercy printed (*Diary* IV:45; *Memoirs of Sister Irene*, p. 2).

April 21, 1938 — Sister Faustina's health deteriorates, and her superiors decide to send her to the hospital in Pradnik again (*Cracow Chron.* IV:119; *Memoirs of Mother Michael*, p. 10).

June 2-5, 1938 — She makes a three-day retreat in the hospital (*Memoirs of Sister Irene Krzyzanowska and Sister Felicia*; *Diary* VI: 114).

June 1938 — She stops writing the *Diary*.

July 1938 — Mother General Michael Moraczewska pays a visit to her at the hospital (*Memoirs of Mother Michael*, p. 10; *Memoirs of Sister Felicia*).

August 1938 — Writing her last letter to Mother General, she begs pardon for all the faults of her whole life and ends with the words: "till we meet in heaven" (*Letters* #23:64; *Memoirs of Mother Michael*, p. 11).

August 24, 1938 — Sister Camille, who is also a patient at the hospital in Pradnik, telephones to the Superior that Sister Faustina's health has significantly worsened. The Superior rides to the hospital and spends the night at Sister Faustina's bedside (*Cracow Chron.* IV: 129).

August 25, 1938 — Rev. T. Czaputa, chaplain of the house of the Congregation in Cracow, goes to the hospital in Pradnik to administer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick (*Cracow Chron.* IV: 129).

August 28, 1938 — Father Sopocko, being in Cracow, pays a visit to the Congregation and visits Sister Faustina a few times in the hospital (*Memoirs of Father Sopocko*, p. 3; *Cracow Chron.* IV: 129).

September 2, 1938 — Father Sopocko visits Sister Faustina in the sanatorium in Pradnik and sees her in ecstasy (*Memoirs of Father Sopocko*, p. 5; *Memoirs of Sister Felicia*).

September 17, 1938 — Very weak and unable to keep much food, Sister

Faustina is taken home from Pradnik. Calm and very uplifting, she waits for the moment of union with the Lord Jesus, not at all afraid to die (Cracow Chron. IV: 131).

September 22, 1938 — As she loses more and more strength, she asks pardon of the entire Congregation for her unintentional failings, and serenely awaits the coming of her Heavenly Bridegroom (Cracow Chron. IV: 132).

September 26, 1938 — Father Sopocko visits her for the last time in Cracow, and she tells him: “My one occupation is to live in the presence of my Heavenly Father.”

[Father Sopocko notes that “She looked like an unearthly being,” and he adds, “At that time, I no longer had the slightest doubt that what she had written in her diary about receiving Holy Communion from an Angel was really true” (Memoirs of Father Sopocko, p. 5).]

October 2, 1938 — Sister Faustina, progressively weaker, but always uplifting, calmly awaits her departure (Cracow Chron. IV: 133).

October 5, 1938 — At 4:00 p.m., Father Andrasz, S.J., arrives, and Sister Faustina makes her confession for the last time (Cracow Chron. IV: 134).

At 9:00 p.m., the Chaplain Rev. T. Czaputa, together with the assembled sisters, prays at her bedside the prayers for the dying. Sister Faustina, conscious to the end, unites with those praying (Cracow Chron. IV: 134).

At 10:45 p.m., Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska, after long sufferings borne with great patience, goes to the Lord for her reward (Cracow Chron. IV: 134).

October 7, 1938 — The funeral of Sister Faustina Kowalska takes place on the First Friday of the month and the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

The Jesuits, Father Wojton and Father Chabrowski from the Monastery of St. Barbara Square, and one cleric from 26 Kopernik Street, take part in the funeral services.

At 8:30 a.m., the Matins are sung, next Father Wojton celebrates the Liturgy at the main altar and Father Chabrowski at the altar of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (where the image of The Divine Mercy, renowned for countless graces, is presently found).

Fr. Chabrowski celebrates the Mass wearing white vestments. As the chronicle notes, everything is done very beautifully. No members of Sister Faustina's family are present at the funeral (Cracow Chron. IV: 134).

Sister Faustina is buried in the convent cemetery situated in the garden of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, 3/9 Wronia Street, Lagiewniki, Cracow, in the common grave found on this cemetery.

October 21, 1965 — Twenty-seven years after the death of Sister Faustina, Bishop Julian Grobicki, specially delegated by Archbishop Karol Wojtyla, begins with a solemn session in the Archdiocese of Cracow, the Informative Process relating to the life and virtues of Sister Faustina. From this moment, Sister Faustina is worthy of the title, Servant of God.

November 25, 1966 — While the Informative Process relating to the virtues, writings and devotion of the Servant of God, Sister Faustina, is being conducted (October 21, 1965 to September 20, 1967), her remains are exhumed and transferred to a tomb specially prepared for this purpose in the chapel of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Over the tomb is a black slab with a cross in the center. The slab usually has fresh flowers brought by the faithful, who plead for numerous graces through the intercession of Sister Faustina.

September 20, 1967 — His Eminence, Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, with a solemn session, closes the Informative Process of the Servant of God in the Cracow Archdiocese.

January 26, 1968 — The Acts of the Informative Process are received in Rome by the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

January 31, 1968 — By a Decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the Process of Beatification of the Servant of God, Sister Faustina H. Kowalska, is formally inaugurated.

April 18, 1993 — The Venerable Servant of God, Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska, is beatified by Pope John Paul II in Rome on the first Sunday after Easter, which is celebrated by many around the world as Divine Mercy Sunday.

April 30, 2000 — Blessed Maria Faustina Kowalska is canonized by Pope John Paul II in Rome, on Divine Mercy Sunday, during the Great Jubilee

Year 2000. And the Pope states during his Canonization homily: “The Second Sunday of Easter from now on throughout the Church will be called ‘Divine Mercy Sunday.’”

My daughter, be diligent in writing down every sentence I tell you concerning My mercy, because this is meant for a great number of souls who will profit from it.

(Diary, 1142)

Divine Mercy
in my Soul
Diary Sr. Faustina

NOTEBOOK I

(1)

1 O Eternal Love, You command Your Sacred Image¹ to be painted

And reveal to us the inconceivable fount of mercy,

You bless whoever approaches Your rays,

And a soul all black will turn into snow.

O sweet Jesus, it is here²

You established the throne of Your mercy

To bring joy and hope to sinful man.

From Your open Heart, as from a pure fount,

Flows comfort to a repentant heart and soul.

May praise and glory for this Image

Never cease to stream from man's soul.

May praise of God's mercy pour from every heart,

Now, and at every hour, and forever and ever.

O My God

2 When I look into the future, I am frightened,

But why plunge into the future?

Only the present moment is precious to me,

As the future may never enter my soul at all.

It is no longer in my power,

To change, correct or add to the past;

For neither sages nor prophets could do that.

And so, what the past has embraced I must entrust to God.

O present moment, you belong to me, whole and entire.

I desire to use you as best I can.

And although I am weak and small,

You grant me the grace of Your omnipotence.

And so, trusting in Your mercy,

I walk through life like a little child,

Offering You each day this heart

Burning with love for Your greater glory.

(2)

+

J. M. J.
[Jesus, Mary, and Joseph]

3

God and souls
King of Mercy, guide my soul.

Sister M. Faustina
of the Blessed Sacrament

Vilnius, July 28, 1934

4 O my Jesus, because of my trust in You,
I weave thousands of garlands, and I know
That they will all blossom.
And I know that they will all blossom
When God's sun will shine on them.

+ O great and Divine Sacrament
That veils my God!
Jesus, be with me each moment,
And no fear will enter my heart.

(3)+ Vilnius, July 28, 1934
J.M.J. + First notebook

God and Souls.

5 Be adored, O Most Holy Trinity, now and for all time. Be adored in all
Your works and all Your creatures. May the greatness of Your mercy be
admired and glorified, O God.

6 I am to write down³ the encounters of my soul with You, O God, at the
moments of Your special visitations. I am to write about You, O
Incomprehensible in mercy towards my poor soul. Your holy will is the
life of my soul. I have received this order through him who is for me
Your representative here on earth, who interprets Your holy Will to me.
Jesus, You see how difficult it is for me to write, how unable I am to put
down clearly what I experience in my soul. O God, can a pen write down
that for which many a time there are no words? But You give the order to
write, O God; that is enough for me.

Warsaw, August 1, 1925

Entrance into the Convent

7 From the age of seven, I experienced the definite call of God, the grace of a vocation to the religious life. It was in the seventh year of my life that, for the first time, I heard God's voice in my soul; that is, an invitation to a more perfect life. But I was not always obedient to the call of grace. I came across no one who would have explained these things to me.

8 The eighteenth year of my life. An earnest appeal to my parents for permission to enter the convent. My parents' flat refusal. After this refusal, I turned myself over to the vain things of life, paying no attention to the call of grace, although my soul found no satisfaction in any of these things. (4) The incessant call of grace caused me much anguish; I tried, however, to stifle it with amusements. Interiorly, I shunned God, turning with all my heart to creatures. However, God's grace won out in my soul.

9 Once I was at a dance [probably in Lodz] with one of my sisters. While everybody was having a good time, my soul was experiencing deep torments. As I began to dance, I suddenly saw Jesus at my side, Jesus racked with pain, stripped of His clothing, all covered with wounds, who spoke these words to me: How long shall I put up with you and how long will you keep putting Me off? At that moment the charming music stopped, [and] the company I was with vanished from my sight; there remained Jesus and I. I took a seat by my dear sister pretending to have a headache in order to cover up what took place in my soul. After a while I slipped out unnoticed, leaving my sister and all my companions behind and made my way to the Cathedral of Saint Stanislaus Kostka.

It was almost twilight; there were only a few people in the cathedral. Paying no attention to what was happening around me, I fell prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament and begged the Lord to be good enough to give me to understand what I should do next.

10 Then I heard these words: **Go at once to Warsaw; you will enter a convent there.** I rose from prayer, came home, and took care of things that needed to be settled. As best I could, I confided to my sister what took place within my soul. I told her to say good-bye to our parents, and

thus, in my one dress, with no other belongings, I arrived in Warsaw.

- 11 When I got off the train and saw that all were going their separate ways, I was overcome with fear. What am I to do? To whom should I turn, as I know no one? So I said to the Mother of God, “Mary, lead me, guide me.” Immediately I heard these words within me telling me to leave the town and to go to a certain nearby village where I would find a safe lodging for the night. I did so and found, in fact, that everything was just as the Mother of God told me.
- 12 Very early the next day, I rode back into the city and entered the first church I saw [St. James Church at Grojecka Street in Ochota, a suburb of Warsaw]. There I began to pray to know further the will of God. Holy Masses were being celebrated one after another. During one of them I heard the words: **Go to that priest** [Father James Dabrowski, pastor of St. James’ Parish] **and tell him everything; he will tell you what to do next.** After the Mass I went to the sacristy. (5) I told the priest all that had taken place in my soul, and I asked him to advise me where to take the veil, in which religious order.
- 13 The priest was surprised at first, but told me to have strong confidence that God would provide for my future. “For the time being,” he said, “I shall send you to a pious lady [Aldona Lipszycowa⁴] with whom you will stay until you enter a convent.” When I called on this lady, she received me very kindly. During the time I stayed with her, I was looking for a convent, but at whatever convent door I knocked, I was turned away. Sorrow gripped my heart, and I said to the Lord Jesus, “Help me; don’t leave me alone.” At last I knocked on our door.⁵
- 14 When Mother Superior, the present Mother General Michael⁶ came out to meet me, she told me, after a short conversation, to go to the Lord of the house and ask whether He would accept me. I understood at once that I was to ask this of the Lord Jesus. With great joy, I went to the chapel and asked Jesus: “Lord of this house, do You accept me? This is how one of these sisters told me to put the question to You.”

Immediately I heard this voice: **I do accept; you are in My Heart.** When I returned from the chapel, Mother Superior asked first of all, “Well, has the Lord accepted you?” I answered, “Yes.” “If the Lord has accepted,

[she said] then I also will accept.”

- 15 This is how I was accepted. However, for many reasons I still had to remain in the world for more than a year with that pious woman [Aldona Lipszycowa], but I did not go back to my own home.

At that time I had to struggle with many difficulties, but God was lavish with His graces. An ever greater longing for God began to take hold of me. The lady, pious as she was, did not understand the happiness of religious life and, in her kindheartedness began to make other plans for my future life. And yet, I sensed that I had a heart so big that nothing would be capable of filling it. And so I turned with all the longing of my soul to God.

- 16 It was during the octave of Corpus Christi [June 25, 1925]. God filled my soul with the interior light of a deeper knowledge of Him as Supreme Goodness and Supreme Beauty. I came to know how very much God loves me. Eternal is His love for me. It was at vespers — in simple words, which flowed from the heart, I made to God (6) a vow of perpetual chastity. From that moment I felt a greater intimacy with God, my Spouse. From that moment I set up a little cell in my heart where I always kept company with Jesus.

- 17 At last the time came when the door of the convent was opened for me — it was the first of August [1925], in the evening, the vigil [of the feast] of Our Lady of the Angels. I felt immensely happy; it seemed to me that I had stepped into the life of Paradise. A single prayer was bursting forth from my heart, one of thanksgiving.

- 18 However, after three weeks I became aware that there is so very little time here for prayer, and of many other things which spoke to my soul in favor of entering a religious community of a stricter observance. This thought took a firm hold of my soul, but the will of God was not in it. Still, the thought, or rather the temptation, was growing stronger and stronger to the point where I decided one day to announce my departure to Mother Superior and definitely to leave [the convent]. But God arranged the circumstances in such a way that I could not get to the Mother Superior [Michael]. I stepped into the little chapel² before going to bed, and I asked Jesus for light in this matter. But I received nothing in my soul

except a strange unrest which I did not understand. But, in spite of everything, I made up my mind to approach Mother Superior the next morning right after Mass and tell her of my decision.

- 19 I came to my cell. The sisters were already in bed — the lights were out. I entered the cell full of anguish and discontent; I did not know what to do with myself. I threw myself headlong on the ground and began to pray fervently that I might come to know the will of God. There is silence everywhere as in the tabernacle. All the sisters are resting like white hosts enclosed in Jesus' chalice. It is only from my cell that God can hear the moaning of a soul. I did not know that one was not allowed to pray in the cell after nine without permission.⁸ After a while a brightness filled my cell, and on the curtain I saw the very sorrowful Face of Jesus. There were open wounds on His Face, and large tears were falling on my bedspread. Not knowing what all this meant, I asked Jesus, "Jesus, who has hurt You so?" And Jesus said to me, **It is you who will cause Me this pain if you leave this convent. It is to this place that I called you and nowhere else; and I have prepared many graces for you.** I begged pardon of Jesus and immediately changed my decision.

(7) The next day was confession day. I related all that had taken place in my soul, and the confessor answered that, from this, God's will is clear that I am to remain in this congregation and that I'm not even to think of another religious order. From that moment on, I have always felt happy and content.

- 20 Shortly after this, I fell ill [general exhaustion]. The dear Mother Superior sent me with two other sisters for a rest to Skolimow, not far from Warsaw. It was at that time that I asked the Lord for whom else should I pray for. Jesus said that on the following night He would let me know for whom I should pray.

[The next night] I saw my Guardian Angel, who ordered me to follow him. In a moment I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves; only we can come to their aid. The flames which were burning them did not touch me at all. My Guardian Angel did not leave me for an instant. I asked these souls what their greatest suffering was. They answered me in one voice that their greatest torment was

longing for God. I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in Purgatory. The souls call her “The Star of the Sea.” She brings them refreshment. I wanted to talk with them some more, but my Guardian Angel beckoned me to leave. We went out of that prison of suffering. [I heard an interior voice] which said, **My mercy does not want this, but justice demands it.** Since that time, I am in closer communion with the suffering souls.

- 21 End of postulancy [April 29, 1926] — My superiors [probably Mother Leonard and Mother Jane⁹] sent me to the novitiate in Cracow. An inconceivable joy reigned in my soul. When we arrived at the novitiate, Sister [Henry¹⁰] was dying. A few days later she came to me [in spirit, after her death] and bid me to go to the Mother Directress of Novices [Sister Margaret¹¹] and tell her to ask her confessor, Father Rospond,¹² to offer one Mass for her and three ejaculatory prayers. At first I agreed, but the next day I decided I would not go to Mother Directress, because I was not sure whether this had happened in a dream or **(8)** in reality. And so I did not go.

The following night the same thing was repeated more clearly; I had no more doubt. Still, in the morning I decided not to tell the Directress about it unless I saw her [Sister Henry] during the day. At once I ran into her in the corridor. She reproached me for not having gone immediately, and a great uneasiness filled my soul. So I went immediately to Mother Directress and told her everything that had happened to me. Mother responded that she would take care of the matter. At once peace reigned in my soul, and on the third day this sister came to me and said, “May God repay you.”

- 22 The day I took the [religious] habit,¹³ God let me understand how much I was to suffer. I clearly saw to what I was committing myself. I experienced a moment of that suffering. But then God filled my soul again with great consolations.
- 23 Toward the end of the first year of my novitiate, darkness began to cast its shadow over my soul. I felt no consolation in prayer; I had to make a great effort to meditate; fear began to sweep over me. Going deeper into myself, I could find nothing but great misery. I could also clearly see the great holiness of God. I did not dare to raise my eyes to Him, but reduced myself to dust under His feet and begged for mercy. My soul was in this

state for almost six months. Our beloved Mother Directress [Mary Joseph¹⁴] encouraged me in these difficult moments. But this suffering continued to grow stronger.

The second year of the novitiate was approaching. Whenever I recalled that I was to make my vows, my soul shuddered. I did not understand what I was reading; I could not meditate; it seemed to me that my prayer was displeasing to God. It seemed to me that by approaching the Holy Sacraments I was offending God even more. But despite this, my confessor [Father Theodore¹⁵] did not let me omit one single Holy Communion. God was working very strangely in my soul. I did not understand anything at all of what my confessor was telling me. The simple truths of the faith became incomprehensible to me. My soul was in anguish, unable to find comfort anywhere.

(9)At a certain point, there came to me the very powerful impression that I am rejected by God. This terrible thought pierced my soul right through; in the midst of the suffering my soul began to experience the agony of death. I wanted to die but could not. The thought came to me: of what use is it to strive for virtues; why mortify oneself when all this is disagreeable to God? When I made this known to the Directress of Novices, I received this reply, “Know, dear Sister, that God has chosen you for great sanctity. This is a sign that God wants to have you very close to Himself in Heaven. Have great trust in the Lord Jesus.”

That dreadful thought of being rejected by God is the actual torture suffered by the damned. I fled to Jesus’ Wounds and repeated the words of trust, but these words became for me an even greater torture. I went before the Blessed Sacrament, and I began to speak to Jesus: “Jesus, You said that a mother would sooner forget her infant than God His creature, and that ‘even if she would forget her infant, I, God, will never forget My creature.’ O Jesus, do You hear how my soul is moaning? Deign to hear the painful whimpers of Your child. I trust in You, O God, because heaven and earth will pass, but Your word will last forever.” Still I found not a moment of relief.

- 24 One day, just as I had awakened, when I was putting myself in the presence of God, I was suddenly overwhelmed by despair. Complete darkness in the soul. I fought as best I could till noon. In the afternoon,

truly deadly fears began to seize me; my physical strength began to leave me. I went quickly to my cell, fell on my knees before the Crucifix and began to cry out for mercy. But Jesus did not hear my cries. I felt my physical strength leave me completely. I fell to the ground, despair flooding my whole soul. I suffered terrible tortures in no way different from the torments of hell. I was in this state for three quarters of an hour. I wanted to go and see the Directress, but was too weak. I wanted to shout but I had no voice. Fortunately, one of the sisters [another novice, Sister Placida Putyra] came into my cell. Finding me in such a strange condition, she immediately told the Directress about it. Mother came at once. As soon as she entered the cell she said, “In the name of holy obedience¹⁶ get up from the ground.” Immediately some force raised me up from the ground and I stood up, close to the dear Mother Directress. **(10)** With kindly words she began to explain to me that this was a trial sent to me by God, saying, “Have great confidence; God is always our Father, even when He sends us trials.”

I returned to my duties as if I had come out from the tomb, my senses saturated with what my soul had experienced. During the evening service, my soul began to agonize again in a terrible darkness. I felt that I was in the power of the Just God, and that I was the object of His indignation. During these terrible moments I said to God, “Jesus, who in the Gospel compare Yourself to a most tender mother,¹⁷ I trust in Your words because You are Truth and Life. In spite of everything, Jesus, I trust in You in the face of every interior sentiment which sets itself against hope. Do what You want with me; I will never leave You, because You are the source of my life.” Only one who has lived through similar moments can understand how terrible is this torment of the soul.

- 25 During the night, the Mother of God visited me, holding the Infant Jesus in Her arms. My soul was filled with joy, and I said, “Mary, my Mother, do You know how terribly I suffer?” And the Mother of God answered me, *I know how much you suffer, but do not be afraid. I share with you your suffering, and I shall always do so.* She smiled warmly and disappeared. At once, strength and a great courage sprang up anew in my soul; but that lasted only one day. It seemed as though hell had conspired against me. A terrible hatred began to break out in my soul, a hatred for all that is holy and divine. It seemed to me that these spiritual torments

would be my lot for the rest of my life. I turned to the Blessed Sacrament and said to Jesus, “Jesus, my Spouse, do You not see that my soul is dying because of its longing for You? How can You hide Yourself from a heart that loves You so sincerely? Forgive me, Jesus; may Your holy will be done in me. I will suffer silently like a dove, without complaining. I will not allow my heart even one single cry of sorrowful complaint.”

- 26 End of the novitiate. The suffering does not diminish. Physical weakness dispenses me from all [community] spiritual exercises; that is to say, they are replaced by brief ejaculatory prayers. Good Friday [April 16, 1928] — Jesus catches up my heart into the very flame of His love. This was during the evening adoration. All of a sudden, the Divine Presence invaded me, and I forgot everything else. Jesus gave me to understand how much He had suffered **(11)** for me. This lasted a very short time. An intense yearning — a longing to love God.

- 27 First vows [First profession of temporary vows, April 30, 1928]. An ardent desire to empty myself for God by an active love, but a love that would be imperceptible, even to the sisters closest to me.

However, even after the vows, darkness continued to reign in my soul for almost a half year. Once, when I was praying, Jesus pervaded all my soul, darkness melted away, and I heard these words within me: **You are My joy; you are My heart’s delight.** From that moment I felt the Most Holy Trinity in my heart; that is to say, within myself. I felt that I was inundated with Divine light. Since then, my soul has been in intimate communion with God, like a child with its beloved Father.

- 28 Once Jesus told me, **Go to Mother Superior** [probably Mother Raphael¹⁸] and ask her to let you wear a hair shirt for seven days, and once each night you are to get up and come to the chapel. I said yes, but I found a certain difficulty in actually going to the Superior. In the evening Jesus asked me, How long will you put it off? I made up my mind to tell Mother Superior the very next time I would see her.

The next day before noon I saw Mother Superior going to the refectory and, since the kitchen, refectory and Sister Aloysia’s little room are all close to each other, I asked Mother Superior to come into Sister Aloysia’s room and told her of the wish of the Lord Jesus. At that, Mother

answered, “I will not permit you to wear any hair shirt. Absolutely not! If the Lord Jesus were to give you the strength of a colossus, I would then permit those mortifications.”

I apologized for taking up Mother’s time and left the room. At that very moment I saw Jesus standing at the kitchen door, and I said to Him, “You commanded me to ask for these mortifications, but Mother Superior will not permit them.” Jesus said, **I was here during your conversation with the Superior and know everything. I don’t demand mortification from you, but obedience. By obedience you give great glory to Me and gain merit for yourself.**

29 One of the Mothers [probably Mother Jane], when she learned about my close relationship with the Lord Jesus, told me that I must be deluding myself. She told me that the Lord Jesus associates in this way only with the saints and not with sinful souls “like you, Sister!” **(12)** After that, it was as if I mistrusted Jesus. In one of my morning talks with Him I said, “Jesus, are You not an illusion?” Jesus answered me, **My love deceives no one.**

30 + On one occasion I was reflecting on the Holy Trinity, on the essence of God. I absolutely wanted to know and fathom who God is. ... In an instant my spirit was caught up into what seemed to be the next world. I saw an inaccessible light, and in this light what appeared like three sources of light which I could not understand. And out of that light came words in the form of lightning which encircled heaven and earth. Not understanding anything, I was very sad. Suddenly, from this sea of inaccessible light came our dearly beloved Savior, unutterably beautiful with His shining Wounds. And from this light came a voice which said, **Who God is in His Essence, no one will fathom, neither the mind of Angels nor of man.** Jesus said to me, **Get to know God by contemplating His attributes.** A moment later, He traced the sign of the cross with His hand and vanished.

31 + Once I saw a big crowd of people in our chapel, in front of the chapel and in the street, because there was no room for them inside.¹⁹ The chapel was decorated for a feast. There were a lot of clergy near the altar, and then our sisters and those of many other congregations. They were all waiting for the person who was to take a place on the altar. Suddenly I

heard a voice saying that I was to take the place on the altar. But as soon as I left the corridor to go across the yard and enter the chapel, following the voice that was calling me, all the people began to throw at me whatever they had to hand: mud, stones, sand, brooms, to such an extent that I at first hesitated to go forward. But the voice kept on calling me even more earnestly, so I walked on bravely.

When I entered the chapel, the superiors, the sisters, the students,²⁰ and even my parents started to hit me with whatever they could, and so whether I wanted to or not, I quickly took my place on the altar. As soon as I was there, (13) the very same people, the students, the sisters, the superiors and my parents all began to hold their arms out to me asking for graces; and as for me, I did not bear any grudge against them for having thrown all sorts of things at me, and I was surprised that I felt a very special love precisely for those persons who had forced me to go more quickly to my appointed place. At the same time my soul was filled with ineffable happiness, and I heard these words, **Do whatever you wish, distribute graces as you will, to whom you will and when you will.** Then, instantly, the vision disappeared.

- 32 Another time I heard these words, **Go to the Superior and ask her to allow you to make a daily hour of adoration for nine days. During this adoration try to unite yourself in prayer with My Mother. Pray with all your heart in union with Mary, and try also during this time to make the Way of the Cross.** I received the permission, though not for a full hour, but only for whatever time was left me after I had carried out my duties.
- 33 I was to make this novena for the intention of my Motherland. On the seventh day of the novena I saw, between heaven and earth, the Mother of God, clothed in a bright robe. She was praying with Her hands folded on Her bosom, Her eyes fixed on Heaven. From Her Heart issued forth fiery rays, some of which were turned toward Heaven while the others were covering our country.
- 34 When I told this and certain other things to my confessor,²¹ he replied that these might really be coming from God, but that they might also be an illusion. Because of my frequent changes [of assignments], I did not have a permanent confessor and besides, I had great difficulty in speaking of

these things. I prayed ardently that the Lord would give me that great grace—that is, a spiritual director. But my prayer was answered only after my perpetual vows, when I went to Vilnius. The priest was Father Sopocko.²² God had allowed me to see him in an interior vision even before I came to Vilnius.²³

35 Oh, if only I had had a spiritual director from the beginning, then I would not have wasted so many of God's graces. A confessor can help a soul a great deal, but he can also cause it a lot of harm. Oh, how careful confessors should be about the work of God's grace in their penitents' souls! This is a matter of great importance. By the graces given to a soul, one can recognize the degree of its intimacy with God.

36 **(14)** Once I was summoned to the judgment [seat] of God. I stood alone before the Lord. Jesus appeared such as we know Him during His Passion. After a moment, His wounds disappeared except for five, those in His hands, His feet and His side. Suddenly I saw the complete condition of my soul as God sees it. I could clearly see all that is displeasing to God. I did not know that even the smallest transgressions will have to be accounted for. What a moment! Who can describe it? To stand before the Thrice-Holy God! Jesus asked me, **Who are you?** I answered, "I am Your servant, Lord." **You are guilty of one day of fire in purgatory.** I wanted to throw myself immediately into the flames of purgatory, but Jesus stopped me and said, **Which do you prefer, suffer now for one day in purgatory or for a short while on earth?** I replied, "Jesus, I want to suffer in purgatory, and I want to suffer also the greatest pains on earth, even if it were until the end of the world." Jesus said, **One [of the two] is enough; you will go back to earth, and there you will suffer much, but not for long; you will accomplish My will and My desires, and a faithful servant of Mine will help you to do this. Now, rest your head on My bosom, on My heart, and draw from it strength and power for these sufferings because you will find neither relief nor help nor comfort anywhere else. Know that you will have much, much to suffer, but don't let this frighten you; I am with you.**

37 Soon afterwards I became ill.²⁴ Physical weakness was for me a school of patience. Only Jesus knows how many efforts of will I had to make to fulfill my duty.²⁵

38 In order to purify a soul, Jesus uses whatever instruments He likes. My soul underwent a complete abandonment on the part of creatures; often my best intentions were misinterpreted by the sisters,²⁶ a type of suffering which is most painful; but God allows it, and we must accept it because in this way we become more like Jesus. There was one thing which I could not understand for a long time: Jesus ordered me to tell everything to my Superiors, but my Superiors did not believe what I said and treated me with pity as though I were being deluded or were imagining things.

Because of this, believing myself to be deluded, I resolved to avoid God interiorly for fear of these illusions. (15) But the grace of God pursued me at every step, and God spoke to me when I least expected it.

39 + One day Jesus told me that He would cause a chastisement to fall upon the most beautiful city in our country [probably Warsaw]. This chastisement would be that with which God had punished Sodom and Gomorrah.²⁷ I saw the great wrath of God and a shudder pierced my heart. I prayed in silence. After a moment, Jesus said to me, **My child, unite yourself closely to Me during the Sacrifice and offer My Blood and My Wounds to My Father in expiation for the sins of that city. Repeat this without interruption throughout the entire Holy Mass. Do this for seven days.** On the seventh day I saw Jesus in a bright cloud and began to beg Him to look upon the city and upon our whole country. Jesus looked [down] graciously. When I saw the kindness of Jesus, I began to beg His blessing. Immediately Jesus said, **For your sake I bless the entire country.** And He made a big sign of the cross over our country. Seeing the goodness of God, a great joy filled my soul.

40 +The year 1929. Once during Holy Mass, I felt in a very special way the closeness of God, although I tried to turn away and escape from Him. On several occasions I have run away from God because I did not want to be a victim of the evil spirit; since others have told me, more than once, that such is the case. And this incertitude lasted for quite some time. During Holy Mass, before Communion, we had the renewal of vows. When we had left our kneelers and had started to recite the formula for the vows, Jesus appeared suddenly at my side clad in a white garment with a golden girdle around His waist, and He said to me, **I give you eternal love that your purity may be untarnished and as a sign that you will never be**

subject to temptations against purity. Jesus took off His golden cincture and tied it around my waist.

Since then I have never experienced any attacks against this virtue, either in my heart or in my mind. I later understood that this was one of the greatest graces which the Most Holy Virgin Mary had obtained for me, as for many years I had been asking this grace of Her. Since that time I have experienced an increasing devotion to the Mother of God. She has taught me how to love God interiorly and also how to carry out His holy will in all things, O Mary, You are joy, because through You God descended to earth [and] into my heart.

41 **(16)** On one occasion I saw a servant of God in the immediate danger of committing a mortal sin. I started to beg God to deign to send down upon me all the torments of hell and all the sufferings He wished if only this priest would be set free and snatched from the occasion of committing a sin. Jesus heard my prayer and, that very instant, I felt a crown of thorns on my head. The thorns penetrated my head with great force right into my brain. This lasted for three hours; the servant of God was set free from this sin, and his soul was strengthened by a special grace of God.

42 + Once, on Christmas Day [1928], I felt the omnipotence and the presence of God surrounding me. And once more I fled from this interior meeting with the Lord. I asked Mother Superior for permission to go to Jozefinek²⁸ to visit the sisters there. The Superior gave us permission, and we started to get ready right after lunch. The other sisters were already waiting for me at the door of the convent while I ran to my cell to get my cloak. On my way back, as I was passing close to the little chapel, I saw Jesus standing in the doorway. He said to me, **Go ahead, but I am taking your heart.** Suddenly I felt that I had no heart in my chest. But the sisters were scolding me for lingering behind, saying that it was already getting late, so I quickly went along with them. But a sense of uneasiness troubled me, and a strange longing invaded my soul, though no one knew what was happening except God.

After we had been at Jozefinek for only a few minutes, I said to the sisters, "Let's go back home." The sisters asked for at least a moment's rest, but my spirit could find no peace. I explained that we must return before dark; and in as much as we had quite a distance to go, we

immediately returned home. When Mother Superior met us in the hallway she asked me, "Haven't the sisters gone yet, or have they already returned?" I said that we had already returned because I did not want to be returning in the evening. I took off my cloak and immediately went to the little chapel. As soon as I entered Jesus said to me, **Go to Mother Superior and tell her that you came back, not in order to reach home before dark, but because I had taken your heart.** Even though this was very difficult for me, I went (17) to the Superior, and I told her frankly the real reason why I had come back so soon, and I asked pardon of the Lord for everything that had displeased Him. And then Jesus filled me with great joy. I understood that apart from God there is no contentment anywhere.

- 43 On one occasion I saw two sisters who were about to enter hell. A terrible agony tore my soul; I prayed to God for them, and Jesus said to me, **Go to Mother Superior and tell her that those two sisters are in danger of committing a mortal sin.** The next day I told this to the Superior. One of them had already repented with great fervor and the other was going through a great struggle.
- 44 One day Jesus said to me, **I am going to leave this house... because there are things here which displease Me.** And the Host came out of the tabernacle and came to rest in my hands and I, with joy, placed it back in the tabernacle. This was repeated a second time, and I did the same thing. Despite this, it happened a third time, but the Host was transformed into the living Lord Jesus, who said to me, **I will stay here no longer!** At this, a powerful love for Jesus rose up in my soul, I answered, "And I, I will not let You leave this house, Jesus!" And again Jesus disappeared while the Host remained in my hands. Once again I put it back in the chalice and closed it up in the tabernacle. And Jesus stayed with us. I undertook to make three days of adoration by way of reparation.
- 45 Once Jesus said to me, **Tell Mother General [Michael] that in this house ... such and such a thing is being committed ... which displeases Me and offends Me greatly.** I did not tell this to Mother right away, but the uneasiness which the Lord made me feel did not permit me to wait a minute longer, and I wrote immediately to Mother General, and

peace returned to my soul.

- 46 I often felt the Passion of the Lord Jesus in my body, although this was imperceptible [to others], and I rejoiced in it because Jesus wanted it so. But this lasted for only a short time. These sufferings set my soul afire with love for God and for immortal souls. Love endures everything, love is stronger than death, love fears nothing...

(18) + February 22, 1931

- 47 In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. In silence I kept my gaze fixed on the Lord; my soul was struck with awe, but also with great joy. After a while, Jesus said to me, **Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then] throughout the world.**
- 48 **I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over [its] enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I Myself will defend it as My own glory.**
- 49 When I told this to my confessor,²⁹ I received this for a reply: “That refers to your soul.” He told me, “Certainly, paint God’s image in your soul.” When I came out of the confessional, I again heard words such as these: My image already is in your soul. I desire that there be a Feast of Mercy. I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy.
- 50 + **I desire that priests proclaim this great mercy of Mine towards souls of sinners. Let the sinner not be afraid to approach Me. The flames of mercy are burning Me — clamoring to be spent; I want to pour them out upon these souls.**

Jesus complained to me in these words, **Distrust on the part of souls is tearing at My insides. The distrust of a chosen soul causes Me even**

greater pain; despite My inexhaustible love for them they do not trust Me. Even My death is not enough for them. Woe to the soul that abuses these [gifts].

- 51 **(19)** When I spoke about this to Mother Superior [Rose,³⁰ telling her] that God had asked this of me, she answered that Jesus should give some sign so that we could recognize Him more clearly.

When I asked the Lord Jesus for a sign as a proof “that You are truly my God and Lord and that this request comes from You,” I heard this interior voice, **I will make this all clear to the Superior by means of the graces which I will grant through this image.**

- 52 When I tried to run away from these interior inspirations, God said to me that on the day of judgment He would demand of me a great number of souls.

Once, exhausted because of these various difficulties that had befallen me because of what Jesus had said to me and what He had demanded of me for the painting of this image, I made up my mind to approach Father Andrasz³¹ before my perpetual vows, and to ask him to dispense me from all these interior inspirations and from the duty of painting this image. After having heard my confession, Father Andrasz gave me this answer: “I will dispense you from nothing, Sister; it is not right for you to turn away from these interior inspirations, but you must absolutely — and I say, absolutely — speak about them to your confessor; otherwise you will go astray despite the great graces you are receiving from God.

For the present you are coming to me for confession, but understand, Sister, that you must have a permanent confessor; that is to say, a spiritual director.”

- 53 I was very upset by this. I thought that I would get myself free from everything, and it turned out quite the opposite — an explicit command to follow the requests of Jesus. And now, still another torment, as I had no permanent confessor. Even if I went to the same confessor for a certain period of time, I could not open my soul to him in respect to these graces, and this caused me ineffable pain. So I asked Jesus to give these graces to someone else, because I did not know how to make use of them

and was only wasting them. “Jesus, have mercy on me; do not entrust such great things to me, as You see that I am a bit of dust and completely inept.”

But the goodness of Jesus is infinite; He had promised me visible help here on earth, and a little while later I received it **(20)** in Vilnius, in the person of Father Sopocko. I had already known him before coming to Vilnius, thanks to an interior vision. One day I saw him in our chapel between the altar and the confessional and suddenly heard a voice in my soul say, **This is the visible help for you on earth. He will help you carry out My will on earth.**

54 + One day, tired out with all these uncertainties, I asked Jesus, “Jesus, are You my God or some kind of phantom? Because my Superiors say that there are all sorts of illusions and phantoms. If You are my Lord, I beg You to bless me.” Then Jesus made a big sign of the cross over me and I, too, signed myself. When I asked pardon of Jesus for this question, He replied that I had in no way displeased Him by this question and that my confidence pleased Him very much.

55 1933. Spiritual Counsel Given Me

by Father Andrasz, S.J.

First: You must not turn away from these interior inspirations, but always tell everything to your confessor. If you recognize that these interior inspirations refer to your own self; that is to say, they are for the good of your soul or for the good of other souls, I urge you to follow them; and you must not neglect them, but always do so in consultation with your confessor.

Second: If these inspirations are not in accord with the faith or the spirit of the Church, they must be rejected immediately as coming from the evil spirit.

Third: If these inspirations do not refer to souls, in general, nor specifically to their good, you should not take them too seriously, and it would be better to even ignore them.

But you should not make this decision by yourself, either one way or the

other, as you can easily be led astray despite these great favors from God. Humility, humility, and ever humility, as we can do nothing of ourselves; all is purely and simply God's grace.

You say to me that God demands great trust from souls; well then, you be the first to show this trust. And one more word — accept all this with serenity.

(21) Words of one of the confessors: “Sister, God is preparing many special graces for you, but try to make your life as clear as crystal before the Lord, paying no attention to what anyone else thinks about you. Let God suffice you; He alone.”

Toward the end of my novitiate, a confessor [perhaps Father Theodore] told me: “Go through life doing good, so that I could write on its pages: ‘She spent her life doing good.’ May God bring this about in you.”

Another time the confessor said to me, “Comport yourself before God like the widow in the Gospel; although the coin she dropped into the box was of little value, it counted far more before God than all the big offerings of others.”

On another occasion the instruction I received was this: “Act in such a way that all those who come in contact with you will go away joyful. Sow happiness about you because you have received much from God; give, then, generously to others. They should take leave of you with their hearts filled with joy, even if they have no more than touched the hem of your garment. Keep well in mind the words I am telling you right now.”

Still another time he gave me the following recommendation: “Let God push your boat out into the deep waters, toward the unfathomable depths of the interior life.”

Here are a few words from a conversation I had with the Mother Directress [Mary Joseph] toward the end of my novitiate: “Sister, let simplicity and humility be the characteristic traits of your soul. Go through life like a little child, always trusting, always full of simplicity and humility, content with everything, happy in every circumstance. There, where others fear, you will pass calmly along, thanks to this simplicity and humility. Remember this, Sister, for your whole life: as

waters flow from the mountains down into the valleys, so, too, do God's graces flow only into humble souls."

56 O my God, I understand well that You demand this spiritual childhood³² of me, because You are constantly asking it of me through Your representatives.

(22) At the beginning of my religious life, suffering and adversities frightened and disheartened me. So I prayed continuously, asking Jesus to strengthen me and to grant me the power of His Holy Spirit that I might carry out His holy will in all things, because from the beginning I have been aware of my weakness. I know very well what I am of myself, because for this purpose Jesus has opened the eyes of my soul; I am an abyss of misery, and hence I understand that whatever good there is in my soul consists solely of His holy grace. The knowledge of my own misery allows me, at the same time, to know the immensity of Your mercy. In my own interior life, I am looking with one eye at the abyss of my misery and baseness, and with the other, at the abyss of Your mercy, O God.

57 O my Jesus, You are the life of my life. You know only too well that I long for nothing but the glory of Your Name and that souls come to know Your goodness. Why do souls avoid You, Jesus? — I don't understand that. Oh, if I could only cut my heart into tiny pieces and in this way offer to You, O Jesus, each piece as a heart whole and entire, to make up in part for the hearts that do not love You! I love You, Jesus, with every drop of my blood, and I would gladly shed my blood for You to give You a proof of the sincerity of my love. O God, the more I know You the less I can comprehend You, but this "non-comprehension" lets me realize how great You are! And it is this impossibility of comprehending You which enflames my heart anew for You, O Lord. From the moment when You let me fix the eyes of my soul on You, O Jesus, I have been at peace and desired nothing else, I found my destiny at the moment when my soul lost itself in You, the only object of my love. In comparison with you, everything is nothing. Sufferings, adversities, humiliations, failures and suspicions that have come my way are splinters that keep alive the fire of my love for You, O Jesus.

My desires are mad and unattainable. I wish to conceal from You that I

suffer. I want (23) never to be rewarded for my efforts and my good actions. You Yourself, Jesus, are my only reward; You are enough, O Treasure of my heart! I want to share compassionately in the sufferings of my neighbors and to conceal my own sufferings, not only from them, but also from You, Jesus.

Suffering is a great grace; through suffering the soul becomes like the Savior; in suffering love becomes crystallized; the greater the suffering, the purer the love.

58 + One night, a sister who had died two months previously came to me. She was a sister of the first choir. I saw her in a terrible condition, all in flames with her face painfully distorted. This lasted only a short time, and then she disappeared. A shudder went through my soul because I did not know whether she was suffering in purgatory or in hell. Nevertheless, I redoubled my prayers for her. The next night she came again, but I saw her in an even more horrible state, in the midst of flames which were even more intense, and despair was written all over her face. I was astonished to see her in a worse condition after the prayers I had offered for her, and I asked, "Haven't my prayers helped you?" She answered that my prayers had not helped her and that nothing would help her. I said to her, "And the prayers which the whole community has offered for you, have they not been any help to you?" She said no, that these prayers had helped some other souls. I replied, "If my prayers are not helping you, Sister, please stop coming to me." She disappeared at once. Despite this, I kept on praying.

After some time she came back again to me during the night, but already her appearance had changed. There were no longer any flames, as there had been before, and her face was radiant, her eyes beaming with joy. She told me that I had a true love for my neighbor and that many other souls had profited from my prayers. She urged me not to cease praying for the souls in purgatory, and she added that she herself would not remain there much longer. How astounding are the decrees of God!

59 (24) 1933. On one occasion I heard these words in my soul, **Make a novena for your country. This novena will consist of the recitation of the Litany of the Saints. Ask your confessor for permission** [probably Father Sopocko or Father Andrasz].

60 I received permission at my next confession and began the novena that very evening. Towards the end of the litany I saw a great radiance and, in the midst of it, God the Father. Between this radiance and the earth I saw Jesus, nailed to the Cross in such a way that when God wanted to look at the earth, He had to look through the wounds of Jesus. And I understood that it was for the sake of Jesus that God blesses the earth.

61 O Jesus, I thank you for this great grace; namely, that You Yourself have deigned to choose a confessor for me, and that You had made him known to me in a vision even before I had met him [Father Sopocko]. When I went to confession to Father Andrasz, I thought that I would be released from following these interior inspirations. Father replied that he could not dispense me from this, “but pray, Sister, that you be given a spiritual director.”

After a short but fervent prayer, I saw Father Sopocko for a second time, in our chapel, between the confessional and the altar. I was in Cracow at that time. These two visions bolstered up my spirit, all the more when I found him to be just as I had seen him in the visions, once at Warsaw during my third probation, and a second time at Cracow. O Jesus, I thank you for this great gift! And now when I hear people sometimes say that they have no confessor; that is to say, a director, fear takes hold of me, because I know very well how much harm I myself experienced when I did not have this help. It is so easy to go astray when one has no guide!

62 O life so dull and monotonous, how many treasures you contain! When I look at everything with the eyes of faith, no two hours are alike, and the dullness and monotony disappear. The grace which is given me in this hour will not be repeated in the next. It may be given me again, but it will not be the same grace. Time goes on, never to return again. Whatever is enclosed in it will never change; it seals with a seal for eternity.

63 (25) + Father Sopocko must be well loved by God. I say this because I myself have experienced how much God defends him at certain moments. When I see this, I rejoice greatly that God has such chosen ones.

64 When I came to Vilnius for two months to replace a sister who had gone for her third probation [Sister Peter, who worked in the kitchen], I stayed a little longer than two months. One day, the Mother Superior [Irene³⁴], wanting to give me a bit of pleasure, gave me permission to go, together with another sister,³⁵ to Calvary to “walk the paths,” as they say. I was delighted. Although it was not very far, it was Mother Superior’s wish that we should go by boat. That evening Jesus said to me, **I want you to stay home.** I answered, “Jesus, everything is ready for us to leave tomorrow morning; what am I to do now?” The Lord answered, **This trip will be harmful to your soul.** I replied to Jesus, “You can find a way out. Arrange things in such a way that Your will may be done.” At that moment the bell announced the time for sleep. I gave Jesus a parting glance and went to my cell.

Next morning the weather was beautiful, and my companion was filled with joy at the prospect of the great pleasure we would have in getting to see everything. But as for me, I was sure we would not go, even though there were no obstacles so far.

We were to receive Holy Communion earlier and leave right after the thanksgiving. But during the time of Communion, all of a sudden, the weather changed. Clouds covered the sky, and the rain came down in torrents. Everyone was astounded at such a sudden change in the weather.

(26) Mother Superior said to me, “I am so sorry you cannot go, Sisters!” I answered, “Dear Mother, it doesn’t really matter that we cannot go; it was God’s will that we stay home.” However, no one knew that it was Jesus’ express desire that I stay home. I spent the whole day in recollection and meditation, thanking the Lord for having kept me home. That day, God granted me many heavenly consolations.

65 One time during the novitiate, when Mother Directress sent me to work in the wards’ kitchen, I was very upset because I could not manage the pots, which were very large. The most difficult task for me was draining the potatoes, and sometimes I spilt half of them with the water. When I told this to Mother Directress, she said that with time I would get used to it and gain the necessary skill. Yet the task was not getting any easier, as I was growing weaker every day. So I would move away when it was time to drain the potatoes. The sisters noticed that I avoided this task and were

very much surprised. They did not know that I could not help in spite of all my willingness to do this and not spare myself. At noon, during the examination of conscience, I complained to God about my weakness. Then I heard the following words in my soul, **From today on you will do this easily; I shall strengthen you.**

That evening, when the time came to drain off the water from the potatoes, I hurried to be the first to do it, trusting in the Lord's words. I took up the pot with ease and poured off the water perfectly. But when I took off the cover to let the potatoes steam off, I saw there in the pot, in the place of the potatoes, whole bunches of red roses, beautiful beyond description. I had never seen such roses before. Greatly astonished and unable to understand the meaning of this, I heard a voice within me saying, **I change such hard work of yours into bouquets of most beautiful flowers, and their perfume rises up to My throne.** From then on I have tried to drain the potatoes myself, not only during my week when it was my turn to cook, (27) but also in replacement of other sisters when it was their turn. And not only do I do this, but I try to be the first to help in any other burdensome task, because I have experienced how much this pleases God.

66 O inexhaustible treasure of purity of intention which makes all our actions perfect and so pleasing to God!

O Jesus, You know how weak I am; be then ever with me; guide my actions and my whole being, You who are my very best Teacher! Truly, Jesus, I become frightened when I look at my own misery, but at the same time I am reassured by Your unfathomable mercy, which exceeds my misery by the measure of all eternity. This disposition of soul clothes me in Your power. O joy that flows from the knowledge of one's self! O unchanging Truth, Your constancy is everlasting!

67 When I fell sick [probably the beginning of consumption] after my first vows and when, despite the kind and solicitous care of my Superiors and the efforts of the doctor, I felt neither better nor worse, remarks began to reach my ears which inferred that I was making believe. With that, my suffering was doubled, and this lasted for quite a long time. One day I complained to Jesus that I was being a burden to the sisters. Jesus answered me, **You are not living for yourself but for souls, and other**

souls will profit from your sufferings. Your prolonged suffering will give them the light and strength to accept My will.

68 The heaviest suffering for me was that it seemed to me that neither my prayers nor my good works were pleasing to God. I did not dare lift up my eyes to heaven. This caused me such great suffering during the community exercises in the chapel that one day Mother Superior [Raphael] called me aside after the exercises and said to me, “Sister, ask God for grace and consolation, because I can see for myself (28) and the sisters keep telling me that the very sight of you evokes pity. I really do not know what to do with you, Sister. I command you to stop tormenting yourself for no reason.”

But all these conferences with Mother Superior brought me no relief, nor did they clarify anything for me. Rather, even greater darkness hid God from me. I looked for help in the confessional, but not even there did I find it. A saintly priest wanted to help me, but I was so miserable that I couldn’t even define my trouble, and that vexed me even more. A deathly sadness penetrated my soul to such an extent that I was unable to hide it, and it was apparent to those around me. I lost hope. The night was growing darker and darker. The priest to whom I went to confession said to me, “I see very special graces in you, Sister, and I am not worried about you at all; why are you torturing yourself in this way?” But at that time I did not understand at all what he was saying and was extremely surprised when, by way of penance, I was ordered to say the *Te Deum* or the *Magnificat*, or to run fast around the garden in the evening, or else to laugh out loud ten times a day. These penances were very surprising to me; but even with that the priest was not able to give me much help. Evidently, God wanted me to give Him glory through suffering.

That priest consoled me, saying that in my present situation I was more pleasing to God than if I were filled with the greatest consolations. “It is a very great grace, Sister,” he told me, “that in your present condition, with all the torments of soul you are experiencing, you not only do not offend God, but you even try to practice virtues. I am looking into your soul, and I see God’s great plans and special graces there; and seeing this, I give thanks to the Lord.” But despite all that, my soul was in a state of torture; and in the midst of unspeakable torments, I imitated the blind man who

entrusts himself to his guide, holding his hand firmly, not giving up obedience for a single moment, and this was my only safety in this fiery trial.

69 **(29)** + O Jesus, eternal Truth, strengthen my feeble forces; You can do all things, Lord. I know that without You all my efforts are in vain. O Jesus, do not hide from me, for I cannot live without You. Listen to the cry of my soul. Your mercy has not been exhausted, Lord, so have pity on my misery. Your mercy surpasses the understanding of all Angels and people put together; and so, although it seems to me that You do not hear me, I put my trust in the ocean of Your mercy, and I know that my hope will not be deceived.

70 Only Jesus knows how burdensome and difficult it is to accomplish one's duties when the soul is so interiorly tortured, the physical powers so weakened and the mind darkened. In the silence of my heart I kept saying to myself, "O Christ, may delights, honor and glory be Yours, and suffering be mine. I will not lag one step behind as I follow You, though thorns wound my feet."

71 I was sent for treatment to our house in Plock, and there I had the privilege of decorating the chapel with flowers. That was at Biala.³⁶ Sister Thecla did not always have time for this, so I often decorated the chapel by myself. One day, I had picked the prettiest roses to decorate the room of a certain person. When I was approaching the porch, I saw Jesus standing there. In a kindly way He asked me, **My daughter, to whom are you taking these flowers?** My silence was my reply to the Lord, because I recognized immediately that I had a very subtle attachment to this person,³⁷ which I had not noticed before. Suddenly Jesus disappeared. At the same moment I threw the flowers on the ground and went before the Blessed Sacrament, my heart filled with gratitude for the grace of knowing myself.

O Divine Sun, in Your rays the soul sees the tiniest specks of dust which displease You.

72 **(30)** O Jesus, eternal Truth, our Life, I call upon You and I beg Your mercy for poor sinners. O sweetest Heart of my Lord, full of pity and unfathomable mercy, I plead with You for poor sinners. O Most Sacred

Heart, Fount of Mercy from which gush forth rays of inconceivable graces upon the entire human race, I beg of You light for poor sinners. O Jesus, be mindful of Your own bitter Passion and do not permit the loss of souls redeemed at so dear a price of Your most precious Blood. O Jesus, when I consider the great price of Your Blood, I rejoice at its immensity, for one drop alone would have been enough for the salvation of all sinners. Although sin is an abyss of wickedness and ingratitude, the price paid for us can never be equalled. Therefore, let every soul trust in the Passion of the Lord, and place its hope in His mercy. God will not deny His mercy to anyone. Heaven and earth may change, but God's mercy will never be exhausted. Oh, what immense joy burns in my heart when I contemplate Your incomprehensible goodness, O Jesus! I desire to bring all sinners to Your feet that they may glorify Your mercy throughout endless ages.

- 73 O my Jesus, despite the deep night that is all around me and the dark clouds which hide the horizon, I know that the sun never goes out. O Lord, though I cannot comprehend You and do not understand Your ways, I nonetheless trust in Your mercy. If it is Your will, Lord, that I live always in such darkness, may You be blessed. I ask You only one thing, Jesus: do not allow me to offend You in any way. O my Jesus, You alone know the longings and the sufferings of my heart. I am glad I can suffer for You, however little. When I feel that the suffering is more than I can bear, I take refuge in the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and I speak to Him with profound silence.

(31) The Confession of One of Our Wards.

- 74 One day I felt driven to take steps to see to it that the Feast of Mercy be instituted and the image of the Merciful Jesus be painted, and I could find no peace. Something was pervading my whole being, and yet I feared being deluded. However, these doubts always came from outside, because in the depths of my soul I felt it was the Lord who was penetrating my being. The priest to whom I was going to confession at that time told me that one can often have illusions, and I felt that he was somewhat afraid to hear my confession. This was a torture for me. Seeing that I was getting very little help from people, I turned all the more to Jesus, the best of all teachers. At one time, when I was filled with doubts

as to whether the voice I heard came from the Lord or not, I began to speak to Jesus interiorly without forming any words. Suddenly an inner force took hold of me and I said, "If You who commune with me and talk to me are truly my God, I beg You, O Lord, to make this ward go this very day to confession; this sign will give me reassurance." At that very moment, the girl asked to go to confession.

The Mother in charge of the class was surprised at this sudden change in her, but she undertook to call a priest immediately, and this person made her confession with great compunction. At the same time, I heard a voice within me say, **Do you believe Me now?** And once again a strange power pervaded my soul, strengthening and reassuring me to such a degree that I myself was surprised that I had allowed myself to doubt even for a moment.

- 75 But these doubts always come from without, a fact which inclined me to close myself up more and more within myself. When, during confession, I sense uncertainty on the part of the priest, I do not open my soul to its depths, but only accuse myself of my sins. A priest who is not at peace with himself will not be able to inspire peace in another soul.

O priests, you bright candles enlightening human souls, let your brightness never be dimmed. I understood that at that time it was not God's will that I uncover my soul completely. Later on, God did give me this grace.

- 76 (32) O my Jesus, direct my mind, take possession of my whole being, enclose me in the depths of Your Heart, and protect me against the assaults of the enemy. My only hope is in You. Speak through my mouth when I, wretchedness itself, find myself with the mighty and wise, so that they will know that this undertaking is Yours and comes from You.

Darkness and Temptations

- 77 My mind became dimmed in a strange way; no truth seemed clear to me. When people spoke to me about God, my heart was like a rock. I could not draw from it a single sentiment of love for Him. When I tried, by an act of the will, to remain close to Him, I experienced great torments, and it seemed to me that I was only provoking God to an even greater anger.

It was absolutely impossible for me to meditate as I had been accustomed to do in the past. I felt in my soul a great void, and there was nothing with which I could fill it. I began to suffer from a great hunger and yearning for God, but I saw my utter powerlessness. I tried to read slowly, sentence by sentence, and to meditate in this way, but this also was of no avail. I understood nothing of what I had read.

The abyss of my misery was constantly before my eyes. Every time I entered the chapel for some spiritual exercise, I experienced even worse torments and temptations. More than once, all through Holy Mass, I had to struggle against blasphemous thoughts which were forcing themselves to my lips. I felt an aversion for the Holy Sacraments, and it seemed to me that I was not profiting from them in any way. It was only out of obedience to my confessor that I frequented them, and this blind obedience was for me the only path I could follow and my very last hope of survival. The priest explained to me that these were trials sent by God and that, in the situation I was in, not only was I not offending God, but I was most pleasing to Him. **(33)** “This is a sign,” he told me, “that God loves you very much and that He has great confidence in you, since He is sending you such trials.” But these words brought me no comfort; it seemed to me that they did not apply to me at all.

One thing did surprise me: it often happened that, at the time when I was suffering greatly, these terrible torments would disappear suddenly just as I was approaching the confessional; but as soon as I had left the confessional, all these torments would again seize me with even greater ferocity. I would then fall on my face before the Blessed Sacrament repeating these words: “Even if You kill me, still will I trust in You!” [cf. Job 13:15] It seemed to me that I would die in these agonies. But the most terrible thought for me was the conviction that I had been rejected by God. Then other thoughts came to me: why strive to acquire virtues and do good works? why mortify and annihilate yourself? what good is it to take vows? to pray? to sacrifice and immolate yourself? why sacrifice myself all the time? what good is it — if I am already rejected by God? why all these efforts? And here, God alone knew what was going on in my heart.

78 Once when I was being crushed by these dreadful sufferings, I went into

the chapel and said from the bottom of my soul, "Do what You will with me, O Jesus; I will adore You in everything. May Your will be done in me, O my Lord and my God, and I will praise Your infinite mercy." Through this act of submission, these terrible torments left me. Suddenly I saw Jesus, who said to me, **I am always in your heart.** An inconceivable joy entered my soul, and a great love of God set my heart aflame. I see that God never tries us beyond what we are able to suffer. Oh, I fear nothing; if God sends such great suffering to a soul. He upholds it with an even greater grace, although we are not aware of it. One act of trust at such moments gives greater glory to God than whole hours passed in prayer filled with consolations. Now I see that if God wants to keep a soul in darkness, no book, no confessor can bring it light.

79 **(34)** O Mary, my Mother and my Lady, I offer You my soul, my body, my life and my death, and all that will follow it. I place everything in Your hands. O my Mother, cover my soul with Your virginal mantle and grant me the grace of purity of heart, soul and body. Defend me with Your power against all enemies, and especially against those who hide their malice behind the mask of virtue. O lovely lily! You are for me a mirror, O my Mother!

80 O Jesus, Divine Prisoner of Love, when I consider Your love and how You emptied Yourself for me, my senses fail me. You hide Your inconceivable majesty and lower Yourself to miserable me. O King of Glory, though You hide Your beauty, yet the eye of my soul rends the veil. I see the angelic choirs giving You honor without cease, and all the heavenly Powers praising You without cease, and without cease they are saying: Holy, Holy, Holy.

Oh, who will comprehend Your love and Your unfathomable mercy toward us! O Prisoner of Love, I lock up my poor heart in this tabernacle, that it may adore You without cease night and day. I know of no obstacle in this adoration, and even though I be physically distant, my heart is always with You. Nothing can put a stop to my love for You. No obstacles exist for me. O my Jesus, I will console You for all the ingratitude, the blasphemies, the coldness, the hatred of the wicked, the sacrileges. O Jesus, I want to burn as a pure offering and to be consumed before the throne of Your hiddenness. I plead with You unceasingly for

poor dying sinners.

81 O Holy Trinity, One and Indivisible God, may You be blessed for this great gift and testament of mercy. My Jesus, to atone for blasphemers I will keep silent when unjustly reprimanded and in this way make partial amends to You. I am singing within my soul an unending hymn to You, and no one will suspect or understand this. The song of my soul is known to You alone, O my Creator and Lord!

82 (35) I will not allow myself to be so absorbed in the whirlwind of work as to forget about God. I will spend all my free moments at the feet of the Master hidden in the Blessed Sacrament. He has been tutoring me from my most tender years.

83 **Write this: before I come as the Just Judge, I am coming first as the King of Mercy. Before the day of justice arrives, there will be given to people a sign in the heavens of this sort:**

All light in the heavens will be extinguished, and there will be great darkness over the whole earth. Then the sign of the cross will be seen in the sky, and from the openings where the hands and the feet of the Savior were nailed will come forth great lights which will light up the earth for a period of time. This will take place shortly before the last day.

84 O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You!

Vilnius, August 2, 1934.

85 On Friday, after Holy Communion, I was carried in spirit before the throne of God. There I saw the heavenly Powers which incessantly praise God. Beyond the throne I saw a brightness inaccessible to creatures, and there only the Incarnate Word enters as Mediator. When Jesus entered this light, I heard these words, **Write down at once what you hear: I am the Lord in My essence and am immune to orders or needs. If I call creatures into being—that is the abyss of My mercy.** And at that very moment I found myself, as before, in our chapel at my kneeler, just as Mass had ended. I already had these words written.

86 +[Once] when I saw how much my confessor [probably Father Sopocko] was to suffer because of this work which God was going to carry out through him, fear seized me for the moment, and I said to the Lord, “Jesus, this is Your affair, so why are You acting this way (36) toward him? It seems to me that You are making difficulties for him while at the same time ordering him to act.”

Write that by day and by night My gaze is fixed upon him and I permit these adversities in order to increase his merit. I do not reward for good results but for the patience and hardship undergone for My sake.

Vilnius, October 26, 1934.

87 On Friday at ten minutes to six, when I and some of our wards³⁸ were coming in from the garden to supper, I saw the Lord Jesus above our chapel, looking just as He did the first time I saw Him and just as He is painted in the image. The two rays which emanated from the Heart of Jesus covered our chapel and the infirmary, and then the whole city, and spread out over the whole world. This lasted about four minutes and disappeared. One of the girls, who was walking with me a little behind the others, also saw these rays, but she did not see Jesus, and she did not know from where these rays were emanating. She was overwhelmed and told the other girls. They began to laugh at her, suggesting that she was imagining things or that perhaps it was light reflected by a passing airplane. But she persisted in her conviction, saying that never had she seen such rays before. When the others suggested that it might have been a searchlight, she replied that she knew very well what a searchlight was like, but never had she seen rays such as these.

After supper the girl approached me and told me she had been so moved by these rays that she could not keep silent, but wanted to tell everyone about them. Yet she had not seen Jesus. She kept telling me about these rays, and this put me in an awkward situation, as I could not tell her that I had seen the Lord Jesus. I prayed for her, asking the Lord to give her those graces of which she had such need. My heart rejoiced in the fact that Jesus takes the initiative to make Himself known, even though the occasion of such action on His part causes me annoyance. For Jesus, one can bear anything.

88 (37) + During adoration I felt God close to me. A moment later I saw Jesus and Mary. At the sight of them I was filled with joy, and I asked the Lord, “What is Your will, Jesus, concerning the matter about which my confessor told me to ask You?” Jesus replied, **It is My will that he should remain here and that he should not take the initiative of dispensing himself.** I asked Jesus whether the inscription could be: “Christ, King of Mercy.” He answered, **I am King of Mercy,** but He did not say “Christ.” **I desire that this image be displayed in public on the first Sunday after Easter. That Sunday is the Feast of Mercy. Through the Word Incarnate, I make known the bottomless depth of My mercy.**

89 + Strangely, all things came about just as the Lord had requested. In fact, it was on the first Sunday after Easter [April, 1935] that the image was publicly honored by crowds of people for the first time. For three days it was exposed and received public veneration. Since it was placed at the very top of a window at Ostra Brama [Shrine of Our Lady, above the “Eastern Gate” to the city of Vilnius], it could be seen from a great distance. At Ostra Brama, during these three days, the closing of the Jubilee of the Redemption of the World was being celebrated, marking the nineteen hundred years that have passed since the Passion of our Savior. I see now that the work of Redemption is bound up with the work of mercy requested by the Lord.

90 One day, I saw interiorly how much my confessor would have to suffer: friends will desert you while everyone will rise up against you and your physical strength will diminish. I saw you as a bunch of grapes chosen by the Lord and thrown into the press of suffering. Your soul, Father, will at times be filled with doubts about this work and about me.

I saw that God himself seemed to be opposing [him], and I asked the Lord why He was acting in this way toward him, as though He were placing obstacles in the way of his doing what He himself had asked him to do. And the Lord said, **I am acting thus with him to give testimony that this work is Mine. Tell him (38) not to fear anything; My gaze is on him day and night. There will be as many crowns to form his crown as there will be souls saved by this work. It is not for the success of a work, but for the suffering that I give reward.**

91 O my Jesus, You alone know what persecutions I suffer, and this only because I am being faithful to You and following Your orders. You are my strength; sustain me that I may always carry out what You ask of me. Of myself I can do nothing, but when You sustain me, all difficulties are nothing for me. O my Lord, I can see very well that from the time when my soul first received the capacity to know You, my life has been a continual struggle which has become increasingly intense.

Every morning during meditation, I prepare myself for the whole day's struggle. Holy Communion assures me that I will win the victory; and so it is. I fear the day when I do not receive Holy Communion. This Bread of the Strong gives me all the strength I need to carry on my mission and the courage to do whatever the Lord asks of me. The courage and strength that are in me are not of me, but of Him who lives in me — it is the Eucharist.

O my Jesus, the misunderstandings are so great; sometimes, were it not for the Eucharist, I would not have the courage to go any further along the way You have marked out for me.

92 Humiliation is my daily food. I understand that the bride must herself share in everything that is the groom's; and so His cloak of mockery must cover me, too. At those times when I suffer much, I try to remain silent, as I do not trust my tongue which, at such moments, is inclined to talk for itself, while its duty is to help me praise God for all the blessings and gifts which He has given me. When I receive Jesus in Holy Communion, I ask Him fervently to deign to heal my tongue so that I would offend neither God nor neighbor by it. I want my tongue to praise God without cease. Great are the faults committed by the tongue. The soul will not attain sanctity if it does not keep watch over its tongue.

93 **(39)** + A Short Version of the Catechism of the Vows³⁹.

Q. What is a vow?

A. A vow is a voluntary promise made to God, to carry out a more perfect act.

Q. Is a vow binding in a matter which is the object of a commandment?

A. Yes. The carrying out of an act which is the object of a commandment

has a double value and merit; and the neglect of such an act is a double transgression and evil, because by breaking such a vow we add to the sin against the commandment, the sin of sacrilege.

Q. Why do religious vows have such value?

A. Because they are the foundation of the religious life approved by the Church, in which the members bound together in a religious community undertake to strive always for perfection by means of the three religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, observed according to the rules.

Q. What is the meaning of the words, “strive for perfection?”

A. To strive for perfection means that the religious life does not in itself demand that perfection be already attained, but obliges, under the pain of sin, that we work daily to attain it. Therefore, a religious who does not want to become perfect neglects his principal duty of state.

Q. What are “solemn” religious vows?

A. “Solemn” religious vows are so absolute that, in extraordinary cases, only the Holy Father can dispense from them.

Q. What are simple religious vows?

A. These are vows which are less absolute — the Holy See dispenses from perpetual and annual vows.

(40)

Q. What is the difference between a vow and a virtue?

A. A vow pertains only to that which is commanded under pain of sin; the virtue goes beyond this and helps in the carrying out of the vow; on the other hand, by breaking the vow we fail in the virtue and do it damage.

Q. To what do the religious vows oblige us?

A. The religious vows oblige us to strive to acquire the virtues and to submit ourselves completely to our Superiors and to the Rules which are in force; thus, the religious gives his own person to the Community, renouncing every right over himself and his actions, which he sacrifices to the service of God.

The Vow of Poverty

The vow of poverty is the voluntary renunciation of the right over property or to the use of such property with the purpose of pleasing God.

Q. What objects does the vow of poverty concern?

A. All those goods and those objects which appertain to the Community. We have no longer any right over anything that has been given to us, once it has been accepted, whether an article or money. All these donations and presents, which may have been given us out of gratitude or in any other way, belong by right to the Community. We cannot make use, without violating the vow, of any wages we may receive for work or even any annuity.

Q. When do we break or violate the vow in a matter which entails the seventh commandment?

A. We break or violate it when, without permission, we take for ourselves anything that belongs to the house; when, without permission, we retain something in order to appropriate it; and when, without authorization, we sell or exchange something that belongs to the Community. When we make use of an object for some other purpose than that intended by the Superior. When we give to, or accept from another, anything whatsoever without permission. When, by negligence, we destroy or damage something. When, in going from one house to another, we take something with us without permission. In a situation where the vow is broken, the religious **(41)** is bound to restitution to the Community.

The Virtue of Poverty

This is an evangelical virtue which impels the heart to detach itself from temporal things; the religious, in virtue of his profession, is strictly obliged to it.

Q. When do we sin against the virtue of poverty?

A. When we desire something, contrary to this virtue. When we become attached to something, and when we make use of superfluous things.

Q. How many degrees of poverty are there and what are they?

A. There are, in practice, four degrees of poverty for one who is a professed religious: to dispose of nothing without the consent of the Superiors (the strict matter of the vow); to avoid superfluities and be

content with necessities (this pertains to the virtue); to readily content oneself with things of inferior quality in what concerns one's cell, clothing, nourishment, etc., and to experience this contentment interiorly; to rejoice in extreme poverty.

The Vow of Chastity

Q. To what does this vow oblige us?

A. To renounce marriage and to avoid everything that is forbidden by the sixth and ninth commandments.

Q. Is a fault against the virtue a violation of the vow?

A. Every fault against the virtue is at the same time a violation of the vow, because here there is no difference, as in the case of poverty and obedience, between the vow and the virtue. (42)

Q. Is every bad thought a sin?

A. No, every bad thought is not a sin; it becomes so only when the acquiescence of the will and consent are joined to the consideration of the mind.

Q. Is there anything, over and above sins against chastity, which is detrimental to the virtue?

A. Lack of custody of the senses, of the imagination, of the feelings; familiarity and sentimental friendships are detrimental to the virtue.

Q. What are the means by which this virtue may be preserved?

A. To conquer interior temptations with the thought of the presence of God, and moreover to fight without fear. And for exterior temptations, to avoid occasions. There are, in all, seven principal means: to guard the senses, to avoid occasions, to avoid idleness, to remove temptations promptly, to remove oneself from all — and especially particular friendships, the spirit of mortification, and to reveal all these temptations to one's confessor.

Besides this, there are also five means of preserving this virtue: humility, the spirit of prayer, modesty of the eyes, fidelity to the rule, a sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Vow of Obedience

The vow of obedience is superior to the first two. It is, to tell the truth, a holocaust, and it is more necessary because it forms and animates the monastic body.

Q. To what does the vow of obedience oblige us?

A. By the vow of obedience, the religious promises to God to be obedient to his legitimate superiors in everything that they will ordain in virtue of the rule. The vow of obedience makes the religious dependent on his superior in virtue of these rules for his whole life and in all his affairs. A religious commits a grave sin against the vow every time he disobeys an order given **(43)** in virtue of obedience and of these rules.

The Virtue of Obedience

The virtue of obedience goes further than the vow; it embraces the rules, the regulations and even the counsels of the superiors.

Q. Is the virtue of obedience indispensable for a religious?

A. The virtue of obedience is so indispensable to a religious that, even if he were to perform good actions contrary to obedience, these would be evil and without merit.

Q. Can we sin gravely against the virtue of obedience?

A. We sin gravely when we scorn the authority or the order of the superior, or when spiritual or temporal harm to the community results from our disobedience.

Q. What faults endanger the vow?

A. To be prejudiced against the superior, or to harbor an antipathy for him — murmuring and criticism, tardiness and negligence.

The Degrees of Obedience

Prompt and complete fulfillment — the obedience of the will, when the will persuades the intellect to submit to the advice of the superior. To facilitate obedience, Saint Ignatius suggests, moreover, three means: always to see God in our superior, whoever he might be; to justify in itself the order or advice of the superior; to accept each order as an order from God, without examining it or reflecting on it. General means: humility. Nothing is difficult for the humble.

94 **(44)** O my Lord, inflame my heart with love for You, that my spirit may not grow weary amidst the storms, the sufferings and the trials. You see how weak I am. Love can do all.

95 + A Deeper Knowledge of God and the Terror of the Soul.

In the beginning, God lets himself be known as Holiness, Justice, Goodness — that is to say, Mercy. The soul does not come to know this all at once, but piecemeal, in flashes; that is to say, when God draws near. And this does not last for long, because the soul could not bear such light. During prayer the soul experiences flashes of this light which make it impossible to pray as before. Try as it may to force itself to pray as it did before, all is in vain; it becomes completely impossible for it to continue to pray as it did before it received this light. This light which has touched the soul is alive within it, and nothing can either quench or diminish it. This flash of the knowledge of God draws the soul and enkindles its love for Him.

But this same flash, at the same time, allows the soul to know itself as it is; the soul sees its whole interior in a superior light, and it rises up alarmed and terrified. Still, it does not remain under the effects of terror, but it begins to purify itself, to humble and abase itself before the Lord. These lights become stronger and more frequent; the more the soul is crystallized, the more these lights penetrate it. However, if the soul has responded faithfully and courageously to these first graces, God fills it with His consolations and gives himself to it in a perceptible manner. At certain moments, the soul, as it were, enters into intimacy with God and greatly rejoices in this; it believes that it has already reached the degree of perfection destined for it, because its defects and faults are asleep within it, and this makes it think that they no longer exist. Nothing seems difficult for it; it is ready for everything. It begins to plunge itself into God and taste the divine delights. It is carried along by grace and does not take account of the fact that the time of trial and testing may come. And, in fact, this state does not last long. Other moments will soon come. I should add here, however, that the soul will respond more faithfully to divine grace if it has a well-informed confessor to whom it can confide everything.

96 **(45)** + Trials sent by God to a soul which is particularly loved by Him.

Temptations and darkness; Satan.

The soul's love [for God] is still not such as God would have it. The soul suddenly loses the tangible perception of God's presence. Various defects and imperfections rise up within it, and it must fight them furiously. All her faults lift up their heads, but the soul's vigilance is great. The former awareness of the presence of God gives place to coldness and spiritual dryness; the soul has no taste for spiritual exercises; it cannot pray, either in the old way, or in the manner in which it had just begun to pray. It struggles this way and that, but can find no satisfaction. God has hidden himself from it, and it can find no consolation in creatures, nor can any of these creatures find a way of consoling it. The soul craves passionately for God, but sees its own misery; it begins to sense God's justice; it seems to it that it has lost all the gifts that God had given it; its mind is dimmed, and darkness fills it; unspeakable torment begins. The soul tries to explain its state to the confessor, but it is not understood and is assailed by an even greater unrest. Satan begins his work.

- 97 Faith staggers under the impact; the struggle is fierce. The soul tries hard to cling to God by an act of will. With God's permission, Satan goes even further: hope and love are put to the test. These temptations are terrible. God supports the soul in secret, so to speak. The soul is not aware of this, but otherwise it would be impossible to stand firm; and God knows very well how much He can allow to befall a soul. The soul is tempted to unbelief in respect to revealed truths and to insincerity toward the confessor. Satan says to it, "Look, no one understands you; why speak about all this?" Words that terrify it sound in its ears, and it seems to the soul that it is uttering these against God. It sees what it does not want to see. It hears what it does not want to hear. And, oh, it is a terrible thing at times like these not to have an experienced confessor! The soul carries the whole burden alone. However, one should make every effort to find, if it is at all possible, a well-informed confessor, for the soul can collapse under the burden and come to the very edge of the precipice. **(46)** All these trials are heavy and difficult. God does not send them to a soul which has not already been admitted to a deeper intimacy with Him and which has not yet tasted the divine delights. Besides, in this God has His own plans, which for us are impenetrable. God often prepares a soul in this way for His future designs and great works. He wants to try it as pure

gold is tried. But this is not yet the end of the testing; there is still the trial of trials, the complete abandonment of the soul by God.

+ The Trial of Trials,

Complete Abandonment — Despair

- 98 When the soul comes out victorious from the preceding trials, even though it may stumble here and there, it fights on valiantly, humbly calling upon God, “Save me, I am perishing!” And it is still able to fight on.

At this point, however, the soul is engulfed in a horrible night. It sees within itself only sin. It feels terrible. It sees itself completely abandoned by God. It feels itself to be the object of His hatred. It is but one step away from despair. The soul does its best to defend itself; it tries to stir up its confidence; but prayer is an even greater torment for it, as this prayer seems to arouse God to an even greater anger. The soul finds itself poised on the summit of a lofty mountain on the very brink of a precipice.

The soul is drawn to God, but feels repulsed. All other sufferings and tortures in the world are as nothing compared with this sensation into which it has been plunged; namely, that of being rejected by God. No one can bring it any relief; it finds itself completely alone; there is no one to defend it. It raises its eyes to heaven, but is convinced that this is not for her — for her all is lost. It falls deeper and deeper from darkness to darkness, and it seems to it that it has lost forever the God it used to love so dearly. This thought is torture beyond all description. But the soul does not agree to it and tries to lift its gaze toward heaven, but in vain! And this makes the torture even more intense.

(47) If God wishes to keep the soul in such darkness, no one will be able to give it light. It experiences rejection by God in a vivid and terrifying manner. From its heart burst forth painful moans, so painful that no priest will comprehend it, unless he himself has been through these trials. In the midst of this, the evil spirit adds to the soul’s suffering, mocking it: “Will you persist in your faithfulness? This is your reward; you are in our power!” But Satan has only as much influence over the soul as God allows him, and God knows how much we can bear. “What have you

gotten out of your mortifications,” says Satan, “and out of your fidelity to the rule? What use are all these efforts? You have been rejected by God!” This word, *rejected*, becomes a fire which penetrates every nerve to the marrow of the bone. It pierces right through her entire being. The ordeal reaches its climax. The soul no longer looks for help anywhere. It shrinks into itself and loses sight of everything; it is as though it has accepted the torture of being abandoned. This is a moment for which I have no words. This is the agony of the soul.

- 99 When for the first time this moment was drawing near, I was snatched from it by virtue of holy obedience. The Directress of Novices, alarmed by my appearance, sent me off to confession, but the confessor did not understand me, and I experienced no relief whatsoever. O Jesus, give us experienced priests!

When I told this priest I was undergoing infernal tortures, he answered that he was not worried about my soul, because he saw in it a great grace of God. But I understood nothing of this, and not even the least glimmer of light broke through to my soul.

- 100 Then my physical strength began to fail me, and I could no longer carry out my duties. Nor could I any longer hide my sufferings. Although I did not say a word about them, the look of pain on my face betrayed me. The Superior told me that the sisters had come to her saying that, when they look at me in the chapel, they are moved to pity because I look so terrible. Yet, despite all efforts, the soul is unable to conceal such suffering.

- 101 Jesus, You alone know how the soul, engulfed in darkness, moans in the midst of these torments and, despite all this, thirsts for God as burning lips thirst for water. It dies and withers; it dies a death without death; that is to say, it cannot die. All its efforts come to nothing; it is under a powerful hand. **(48)** Now the soul comes under the power of the Just One. All exterior temptations cease; all that surrounds it becomes silent, like a dying person who loses contact with everything around it: the person’s entire soul is in the hand of the Just God, the Thrice-Holy God, — rejected for all eternity! This is the culminating moment, and God alone can test a soul in this way, because He alone knows what the soul can endure.

When the soul has been saturated through and through by this infernal fire, it is, as it were, cast headlong into great despair. My soul experienced this moment when I was all alone in my cell. When my soul began to sink into this despair, I felt that the end was near. But I seized my little crucifix and clutched it tightly in my hand. And now I felt my body separate itself from my soul; and though I wanted to go to my Superiors, I no longer had the physical strength. I uttered my last words: "I trust in Your Mercy!" — and it seemed to me that I provoked God to an even greater anger. And now I was drowned in despair, and all that was left me was a moan of unadulterated pain which, from time to time, tore itself from my soul. The soul is in agony — and it seemed to me that I would remain in this state, because by my own strength I could not emerge from it. Every recollection of God opened up an unspeakable ocean of suffering, and yet despite this there is something within the soul which is drawn to Him, though it seems to her for this only — that she suffer more. The memory of the love with which God formerly surrounded it is still another kind of suffering. His gaze pierces it, and everything within the soul is burned by this gaze.

102 After some time, one of the sisters came into the cell and found me almost dead. She was frightened and went to find the Directress of Novices who, in the name of holy obedience ordered me to get up from the ground. My strength returned immediately, and I got up, trembling. The Directress recognized immediately the state of my soul and spoke to me about the inscrutable mercy of God, saying, "Do not be distressed about anything, Sister. I command this of you in virtue of obedience." Then she said to me, "I see now, Sister, that God is calling you to a high degree of holiness; the Lord wants to draw you very close to Himself since He has allowed these things to happen to you so soon. Be faithful to God, Sister, because this is a sign that He wants you to have a high place in heaven." However, I did not understand anything of these words. (49) When I went into the chapel, I felt as though my soul had been set free from everything, as though I had just come forth from the hand of God. I perceived the inviolability of my soul; I felt that I was a tiny child.

103 Suddenly I saw the Lord interiorly, and He said to me, **Fear not, My daughter; I am with you.** In that single moment, all the darkness and torments vanished, my senses were inundated with unspeakable joy,

[and] the faculties of my soul filled with light.

104 I want to add that, although my soul was already in the rays of His love, traces of my past tortures remained on my body for two days: a deathly pale face and bloodshot eyes. Jesus alone knows what I suffered. What I have written is very poor compared to the reality. I cannot put it in words; it seemed to me that I had come back from the other world. I feel an aversion for everything that is created; I snuggle to the heart of God like a baby to its mother's breast. I see everything differently now. I am conscious of what the Lord, by one single word, has done in my soul, and I live by it. I shudder at the recollection of this past torture. I would not have believed that one could suffer so, if I had not gone through it myself. This is a completely spiritual suffering.

105 However, in all these sufferings and struggles, I was not omitting Holy Communion. When it seemed to me that I should not communicate, I went, before Holy Communion, to the Directress and told her that I could not approach the Sacrament, because it seemed to me that I should not do so. But she would not permit me to omit Holy Communion, so I went, and I understand now that it was only obedience that saved me.

The Directress herself told me later that my trials had passed quickly, "and this solely because you were obedient, Sister; and it was through the power of obedience that you struggled through this so bravely." It is true that it was the Lord Himself who brought me out of this torment, but my fidelity to obedience did please Him.

106 Though these are frightening things, the soul should not be too fearful, because God will never test us beyond what we are able to bear. On the other hand, He may never send us such sufferings, but I write this because, if it pleases the Lord to let a soul pass **(50)** through such sufferings, it should not be afraid but, insofar as this depends on the soul itself, it should remain faithful to God. God will do a soul no harm, because He is Love itself, and in this unfathomable love has called it into being. However, when I was so tormented, I myself did not understand this.

107 O my God, I have come to know that I am not of this earth; You, O Lord, have poured this profound awareness into my soul. My communion

is more with heaven than with earth, though I in no way neglect my duties.

108 During those times, I had no spiritual director; I was without any kind of guidance whatever. I begged the Lord, but He did not give me a director. Jesus Himself has been my Master from the days of my infancy up to the present moment. He accompanied me across all the deserts and through all dangers. I see clearly that God alone could have led me through such great perils unharmed, with my soul untarnished and passing victoriously through all difficulties, immense though they were. Going out [...] Later on, the Lord did give me a director.

109 After such sufferings the soul finds itself in a state of great purity of spirit and very close to God. But I should add that during these spiritual torments it is close to God, but it is blind. The soul's vision is plunged into darkness, and though God is nearer than ever to the soul which is suffering, the whole secret consists in the fact that it knows nothing of this. The soul in fact declares that, not only has God abandoned it, but it is the object of His hatred. How grave is the malady of the eyes of the soul which, struck by divine light, claims that there is no light, whereas, it is so intense that it blinds her. Yet despite all, I learned later that God is closer to a soul at such moments than at others, because it would not be able to endure these trials with the help of ordinary grace alone. God's omnipotence and an extraordinary grace must be active here, for otherwise the soul would succumb at the first blow.

110 O Divine Master, what happens in my soul is Your work alone! You, O Lord, are not afraid to place the soul on the edge of a terrible precipice where it stands, alarmed and filled with fright, and then You call it back again to Yourself. These are Your imponderable mysteries.

111 (51) When, in the midst of these interior torments, I tried to accuse myself in confession of the smallest trifles, the priest was surprised that I had not committed graver faults, and he said to me, "If you are as faithful as this to God during these sufferings, this in itself is evidence to me that God is sustaining you, Sister, with a special grace, and it is a good thing that you do not understand this." It is a strange thing, nevertheless, that confessors could neither understand me nor set my mind at peace concerning these matters, until I met Father Andrasz and, later on, Father

Sopocko.

112 + A few words about confession and confessors. I shall speak only of what I have experienced and gone through within my own soul. There are three things which hinder the soul from drawing profit from confession in these exceptional moments.

The first thing: when the confessor has little knowledge of extraordinary ways and shows surprise if a soul discloses to him the great mysteries worked in it by God. Such surprise frightens a sensitive soul, and it notices that the confessor hesitates to give his opinion; and if it does notice this, it will not be set at peace, but will have even more doubts after confession than before, because it will sense that the confessor is trying to set it at peace while he himself is uncertain. Or else, as has happened to me, a confessor, unable to penetrate some of the soul's mysteries, refuses to hear the confession, showing a certain fear when the soul approaches the confessional.

How can a soul in this state obtain peace in the confessional when it has become so oversensitive to every word of the priest? In my opinion, at times of such special trials sent by God to a soul, the priest, if he does not understand the soul, should direct it to some other experienced and well-instructed confessor. Or else he himself should seek light in order to give the soul what it needs, instead of downrightly denying it confession. For in this way he is exposing the soul to a great danger; and more than one soul may well leave the road along which God wanted it to journey. This is a matter of great importance, for I have experienced it myself. I myself began to waver; despite special gifts from God, and even though God Himself reassured me, I have nevertheless always wanted to have the Church's seal as well.

(52) The second thing: the confessor does not allow the soul to express itself frankly, and shows impatience. The soul then falls silent and does not say everything [it has to say] and, by this, profits nothing. It profits even less when the confessor, without really knowing the soul, proceeds to put it to the test. Instead of helping the soul, he does it harm. The soul is aware that the confessor does not know it, because he did not allow it to lay itself open fully as regards both its graces and its misery. And so the test is ill-adapted. I have been submitted to some tests at which I have

had to laugh.

I will express this better thus: The confessor is the doctor of the soul, but how can a doctor prescribe a suitable remedy if he does not know the nature of the sickness? Never will he be able to do so. For either the remedy will not produce the desired effect, or else it will be too strong and will aggravate the illness, and sometimes — God forbid — even bring about death. I am speaking from my own experience because, in certain instances, it was the Lord himself who directly sustained me.

The third thing: it also happens sometimes that the confessor makes light of little things. There is nothing little in the spiritual life. Sometimes a seemingly insignificant thing will disclose a matter of great consequence and will be for the confessor a beam of light which helps him to get to know the soul. Many spiritual undertones are concealed in little things.

A magnificent building will never rise if we reject the insignificant bricks. God demands great purity of certain souls, and so He gives them a deeper knowledge of their own misery. Illuminated by light from on high, the soul can better know what pleases God and what does not. Sin depends upon the degree of knowledge and light that exists within the soul. The same is true of imperfections. Although the soul knows that it is only sin in the strict sense of the term which pertains to the sacrament of penance, yet these petty things are of great importance to a soul which is tending to sanctity, and the confessor must not treat them lightly. The patience and kindness of the confessor open the way to the innermost secrets of the soul. The soul, unconsciously as it were, reveals its abysmal depth and feels stronger and more resistant; it fights with greater courage and tries to do things better because it knows it must give an account of them.

(53) I will mention one more thing regarding the confessor. It is his duty to occasionally put to the test, to try, to exercise, to learn whether he is dealing with straw, with iron or with pure gold. Each of these three types of souls needs different kinds of training. The confessor must — and this is absolutely necessary — form a clear judgment of each soul in order to know how heavy a burden it can carry at certain times, in certain circumstances, or in particular situations. As for myself, it was only later on, after many [negative] experiences, that, when I saw that I was not

understood, I no longer laid bare my soul or allowed my peace to be disturbed. But this happened only when all these graces had already been submitted to the judgement of a wise, well-instructed and experienced confessor. Now I know what to go by in certain cases.

113 And again, I would like to say three words to the soul that is determined to strive for sanctity and to derive fruit; that is to say, benefit from confession.

First [word] — complete sincerity and openness. Even the holiest and wisest confessor cannot forcibly pour into the soul what he desires if it is not sincere and open. An insincere, secretive soul risks great dangers in the spiritual life, and even the Lord Jesus Himself does not give Himself to such a soul on a higher level, because He knows it would derive no benefit from these special graces.

Second word — humility. A soul does not benefit as it should from the sacrament of confession if it is not humble. Pride keeps it in darkness. The soul neither knows how, nor is it willing, to probe with precision the depths of its own misery. It puts on a mask and avoids everything that might bring it recovery.

Third word — obedience. A disobedient soul will win no victory, even if the Lord Jesus Himself, in person, were to hear its confession. The most experienced confessor will be of no help whatsoever to such a soul. The disobedient soul exposes itself to great misfortunes; it will make no progress toward perfection, nor will it succeed in the spiritual life. God lavishes His graces most generously upon the soul, but it must be an obedient soul.

114 (54) + Oh, how pleasing are the hymns flowing from a suffering soul! All heaven delights in such a soul, especially when it is tested by God. It mournfully sings out its longing for Him. Great is its beauty, because it comes from God. The soul walks through the jungle of life, wounded by God's love. With one foot only it touches the ground.

115 + When a soul has come out of these tribulations, it is deeply humble. Its purity of soul is great. It knows better without need of reflecting, as it were, what it ought to do at a given moment and what to forbear. It feels

the lightest touch of grace and is very faithful to God. It recognizes God from afar and continuously rejoices in Him. It discovers God very quickly in other souls and in its environment in general. The soul has been purified by God Himself. God, as Pure Spirit, introduces the soul to a life which is purely spiritual. God Himself has first prepared and purified the soul; that is, He has made it capable of close communion with Himself. The soul, in a state of loving repose, communes spiritually with the Lord. It speaks to God without the need of expressing itself through the senses. God fills it with His light.

The enlightened mind sees clearly and distinguishes the various degrees of the spiritual life. It recognizes [that state] when its union with God was imperfect: where the senses were involved, and the spirit was linked with the senses in a manner — exalted and special, to be sure — but not yet perfect. There is a higher and more perfect union with God; namely, intellectual union. Here, the soul is safer from illusions; its spirituality is purer and more profound. In a life where the senses are involved, there is more danger of illusion. Both for the soul and for its confessor, prudence must play a greater part. There are moments when God introduces the soul to a purely spiritual state. The senses dim and are seemingly dead. The soul is most closely united to God; it is immersed in the Deity; its knowledge is complete and perfect, not sporadic as before, but total and absolute. It rejoices in this. But I want to say more about those moments of trial; at those times the confessor must have patience with such a soul. But the soul must have even greater patience with itself.

116 (55) My Jesus, You know what my soul goes through at the recollection of these sufferings. I have often marvelled that the angels and saints hold their peace at the sight of a soul suffering like that. Yet they have special love for us at such moments. My soul has often cried out after God, as a little child who cries as loudly as he can when his mother covers her face and he cannot recognize her. O my Jesus, honor and glory to You for these trials of love! Great and incomprehensible is your mercy. All that You intended for my soul, O Lord, is steeped in Your mercy.

117 I will mention here that those who live with such a person should not add external sufferings; for indeed, when the soul's cup is full, the little drop we may add to it may be the one drop too much, and the cup of

bitterness will overflow. And who will answer for such a soul? Let us beware of adding to the suffering of others, because that is displeasing to the Lord. If the sisters or the superiors knew or even suspected that a soul was suffering such trials, and they nevertheless added still other sufferings, they would be sinning gravely, and God Himself would demand an account of them on behalf of such a soul. I am not speaking here of instances which of their very nature are sinful, but of things which in other circumstances would not be sinful. Let us be on our guard against having the weight of such a soul on our conscience. This is a grave and common defect in religious life; namely, that when one sees a suffering soul, one always wants to add even more suffering. I do not say that everyone acts like this, but there are some. We take the liberty of passing all sorts of judgments, and we repeat them when we would do better to remain silent.

118 The tongue is a small member, but it does big things. A religious who does not keep silence will never attain holiness; that is, she will never become a saint. Let her not delude herself — unless it is the Spirit of God who is speaking through her, for then she must not keep silent. But, in order to hear the voice of God, one has to have silence in one's soul and to keep silence; not a gloomy silence, but an interior silence; that is to say, recollection in God. One can speak a great deal without breaking silence and, on the contrary, one can speak little and be constantly breaking silence. Oh, what irreparable damage is done by the breach **(56)** of silence! We cause a lot of harm to our neighbor, but even more to our own selves.

In my opinion, and according to my experience, the rule concerning silence should stand in the very first place. God does not give Himself to a chattering soul which, like a drone in a beehive, buzzes around but gathers no honey. A talkative soul is empty inside. It lacks both the essential virtues and intimacy with God. A deeper interior life, one of gentle peace and of that silence where the Lord dwells, is quite out of the question. A soul that has never tasted the sweetness of inner silence is a restless spirit which disturbs the silence of others. I have seen many souls in the depths of hell for not having kept their silence; they told me so themselves when I asked them what was the cause of their undoing. These were souls of religious. My God, what an agony it is to think that

not only might they have been in heaven, but they might even have become saints! O Jesus, have mercy!

119 I tremble to think that I have to give an account of my tongue. There is life, but there is also death in the tongue. Sometimes we kill with the tongue: we commit real murders. And we are still to regard that as a small thing? I truly do not understand such consciences. I have known a person who, when she learned from someone that a certain thing was being said about her, fell seriously ill. She lost a good deal of blood and shed many tears, and the outcome was very sad. It was not the sword that did all this, but the tongue. O my silent Jesus, have mercy on us!

120 I have wandered onto the subject of silence. But this is not what I wanted to speak about, but rather about the soul's life with God and about its response to grace. When a soul has been cleansed, and the Lord is on intimate terms with it, it begins to apply all its inner force in striving after God. Yet the soul cannot do anything of itself. God alone arranges everything. The soul knows this and is mindful of it. It is still in exile and understands well that there may yet come cloudy and rainy days, but it must now look upon things differently from what it had up to now. It does not seek reassurance in a false peace, but makes ready for battle. It knows it comes from a warrior race. It is now much more aware of everything. It knows that it is of royal stock. It is concerned with all that is great and holy.

121 (57) + There is a series of graces which God pours into the soul after these trials by fire. The soul enjoys intimate union with God. It has many visions, both corporeal and intellectual. It hears many supernatural words, and sometimes distinct orders. But despite these graces, it is not self-sufficient. In fact, it is even less so as a result of God's graces, because it is now open to many dangers and can easily fall prey to illusions. It ought to ask God for a spiritual director; but not only must it pray for one, it must also make every effort to find a leader who is an expert in these things, just as a military leader must know the ways along which he will lead [his followers] into battle. A soul that is united with God must be prepared for great and hard-fought battles.

+ After these purifications and tears, God abides in the soul in a special way, but the soul does not always cooperate with these graces. Not that

the soul itself is not willing to work, but it encounters so many interior and exterior difficulties that it really takes a miracle to sustain the soul on these summits. In this, it absolutely needs a director. People have often sown doubt in my soul, and I myself have sometimes become frightened at the thought that I was, after all, an ignorant person and did not have knowledge of many things, above all, spiritual things. But when my doubts increased, I sought light from my confessor or my superiors. Yet I did not obtain what I desired.

122 When I opened myself up to my superiors, one of them [probably Mother Michael or Mother Mary Joseph] understood my soul and the road God intended for me. When I followed her advice, I made quick progress towards perfection. But this did not last long. When I opened up my soul still more deeply, I did not obtain what I desired; it seemed to my superior that these graces [of which I was the object] were unlikely, and so I could not draw any further help from her. She told me it was impossible that God should commune with His creatures in such a way: “I fear for you, Sister; isn’t this an illusion of some sort! **(58)** You’d better go and seek the advice of a priest.” But the confessor did not understand me and said, “You’d better go, Sister, and talk about these matters with your superiors.” And so I would go from the superiors to the confessor and from the confessor to the superiors, and I found no peace. These divine graces became a great suffering for me. And more than once I said to the Lord directly, “Jesus, I am afraid of You; could You not be some kind of a ghost?” Jesus always reassured me, but I still continued to be incredulous. It is a strange thing however: the more I became incredulous, the more Jesus gave me proofs that these things came from Him.

123 + When I saw that my mind was not being set at rest by my superiors, I decided to say nothing [to them] of these purely interior matters. Exteriorly I tried, as a good nun should, to tell everything to my superiors, but as for the needs of my soul, I spoke about these only in the confessional. For many very good reasons, I learned that a woman is not called to discern such mysteries. I laid myself open to much unnecessary suffering. For quite a long time I was regarded as one possessed by the evil spirit, and I was looked upon with pity, and the superior took certain precautionary actions in my respect. It reached my ears that the sisters

also regarded me as such. And the sky grew dark around me. I began to shun these divine graces, but it was beyond my power to do so. Suddenly, I would be enveloped in such recollection that, against my will, I was immersed in God, and the Lord kept me completely dependent upon Himself.

124 In the initial moments, my soul is always a little frightened; but later, it is filled with a strange peace and strength.

125 + All these things could still be endured. But when the Lord demanded that I should paint that picture, they began to speak openly about me and to regard me as a hysteric and a fantasist, and the rumors began to grow louder. One of the sisters came to talk to me in private. She began by pitying me and said, "I've heard them say that you are a fantasist, Sister, and that you've been having visions. My poor Sister, defend yourself in this matter." (59) She was a sincere soul, and she told me sincerely what she had heard. But I had to listen to such things every day. God only knows how tiring it was.

126 Yet, I resolved to bear everything in silence and to give no explanations when I was questioned. Some were irritated by my silence, especially those who were more curious. Others, who reflected more deeply, said, "Sister Faustina must be very close to God if she has the strength to bear so much suffering." It was as if I were facing two groups of judges. I strove after interior and exterior silence. I said nothing about myself, even though I was questioned directly by some sisters. My lips were sealed. I suffered like a dove, without complaint. But some sisters seemed to find pleasure in vexing me in whatever way they could. My patience irritated them. But God gave me so much inner strength that I endured it calmly.

127 + I learned that I would have help from no one at such moments, and I started to pray and beg the Lord for a confessor. My only desire was that some priest would say this one word to me, "Be at peace, you are on the right road," or "Reject all this for it does not come from God." But I could not find such a priest who was sufficiently sure of himself to give me a definite opinion in the name of the Lord. And so the uncertainty continued. O Jesus, if it is Your will that I live in such uncertainty, may Your Name be blessed! I beg You, Lord, direct my soul yourself and be

with me, for of myself I am nothing.

128 Thus I have already been judged from all sides. There is no longer anything in me that has escaped the sisters' judgment. But it seems now to have worn itself out, and they have begun to leave me in peace. My tormented soul has had some rest, and I have learned that the Lord has been closest to me in times of such persecutions. This [truce] lasted for only a short time. A violent storm broke out again. And now the old suspicions became, for them, as if true facts, and once again I had to listen to the same old songs. The Lord would have it that way. But then, strangely enough, even exteriorly I began to experience **(60)** various failures. This brought down on me many sufferings of all sorts, known to God alone.

But I tried as best I could to do everything with the purest of intentions. I could now see that everywhere I was being watched like a thief: in the chapel; while I was carrying out my duties; in my cell.⁴⁰ I was now aware that, besides the presence of God, I had always close to me a human presence as well. And I must say that, more than once, this human presence bothered me greatly. There were times when I wondered whether I should undress to wash myself or not. Indeed, even that poor bed of mine was checked many times.⁴¹ More than once I was seized with laughter when I learned they would not even leave my bed alone. One of the sisters herself told me that she came to observe me in my cell every evening to see how I behave in it.

Still, superiors are always superiors. And although they humiliated me personally and, on occasions, filled me with all kinds of doubts, they always allowed me to do what the Lord demanded. Though not in the way I asked, but in some other way, they fulfilled the Lord's demands and gave me permission for all the rigors and mortifications [He asked of me].

One day, one of the Mothers [probably Mother Jane] poured out so much of her anger on me and humiliated me so much that I thought I would not be able to endure it. She said to me, "You queer, hysterical visionary, get out of this room; go on with you, Sister!" She continued to pour out upon my head everything she could think of. When I got to my cell, I fell on my face before the cross, and then looked at Jesus; but I could no longer

say a single word. Yet I concealed everything from the others and pretended that nothing had happened between us.

129 Satan always takes advantage of such moments; thoughts of discouragement began to rise to the surface — for your faithfulness and sincerity — this is your reward. How can one be sincere when one is so misunderstood? Jesus, Jesus, I cannot go on any longer. Again I fell to the ground under this weight, and I broke out in a sweat, and fear began to overcome me. I had no one to lean on interiorly. Suddenly I heard a voice within my soul, **Do not fear; I am with you.** And an unusual light illumined my mind, and I understood that I should not give in to such sorrows. I was filled with a certain strength and left my cell with new courage to suffer.

130 (61) Nevertheless, I began to grow a bit negligent. I did not pay attention to these interior inspirations and tried to distract myself. But despite the noise and the distraction, I could see what was going on in my soul. The word of God is clear, and nothing can stifle it. I began to avoid encounters with the Lord in my soul because I did not want to fall prey to illusions. However, in a sense, the Lord kept pursuing me with His gifts; and truly I experienced, alternately, torture and joy. I make no mention here of the various visions and graces God granted me during this time, because I've written this down elsewhere.⁴²

131 But I will simply mention here that these various sufferings had come to a peak, and I resolved to put an end to these doubts of mine before my perpetual vows. Throughout my probation, I prayed for light for the priest to whom I was to open up my soul to its depths. I asked God that He Himself would help me and grant me the grace to be able to express even the most secret things that exist between me and Him and to be so disposed that, whatever the priest would decide, I would accept as coming from Jesus Himself. No matter what judgment he would pass on me, all I wanted was the truth and a decisive answer to certain questions. I put myself completely in God's hands, and [all] my soul desired was the truth. I could not go on living in doubt any longer although, in the depths of my soul, I was so very sure that these things came from God, that I would lay down my life for this. However, I placed the confessor's opinion above all, and I made up my mind to do as he thought best and to

act according to the advice that he would give me. I looked forward to that moment which would decide the course of my actions for the rest of my life. I knew that everything would depend on this. It mattered little whether what he would say to me would be in accord with my inspirations or quite the contrary; this no longer mattered to me. I wanted to know the truth and follow it.

Jesus, You can help me! From this moment, I have begun anew. I conceal all the graces within my soul and await whomsoever the Lord will send me. With no doubt in my heart, I asked the Lord himself to deign to help me during these moments, and a courage of sorts entered my soul.

132 **(62)** I must again mention that there are some confessors who seem to be true spiritual fathers, but only as long as things go well. When the soul finds itself in greater need, they become perplexed, and either cannot or will not understand the soul. They try to get rid of the person as soon as possible. But if the soul is humble, it will always profit in some little way or other. God Himself will sometimes cast a shaft of light into the depths of the soul, because of its humility and faith. The confessor will sometimes say something he had never intended to say, without even realizing it himself. Oh, let the soul believe that such words are the words of the Lord Himself! Though indeed we ought to believe that every word spoken in the confessional is God's, what I have referred to above is something that comes directly from God. And the soul perceives that the priest is not master of himself, that he is saying things that he would rather not say. This is how God rewards faith.

I have experienced this many times myself. A certain very learned and respected priest [probably Father Wilkowski, the sisters' confessor at Plock], to whom I sometimes happened to go to confession, was always severe and opposed to these matters [which I brought up to him]. But on one occasion he replied to me, "Bear in mind, Sister, that if God is asking this of you, you should not oppose Him. God sometimes wants to be praised in just this way. Be at peace; what God has started, He will finish. But I say this to you: faithfulness to God and humility. And once again: humility. Bear well in mind what I have told you today." I was delighted, and I thought that perhaps this priest had understood me. But it so turned out that I never went to confession to him again.

133 + Once, one of the older Mothers [probably Mother Jane⁴³] summoned me, and it was as if fiery bolts from the blue were coming down upon my head, so much so that I could not even discover what it was all about. But after a while I understood that it was about a matter over which I had no control whatsoever. She said to me, “Get it out of your head, Sister, that the Lord Jesus might be communing in such an intimate way with such a miserable bundle of imperfections as you! Bear in mind that it is only with holy souls that the Lord Jesus communes in this way!” I acknowledged that she was right, because I am indeed a wretched person, but still I trust in God’s mercy. When I met the Lord I humbled myself and said, “Jesus, it seems that You do not associate intimately with such wretched people as I.” **Be at peace, My daughter, it is precisely through such misery that I want to show the power of My mercy.** I understood that this Mother had merely wanted to subject me to a [salutary] humiliation.

134 (63) + O my Jesus, You have tested me so many times in this short life of mine! I have come to understand so many things, and even such that now amaze me. Oh, how good it is to abandon oneself totally to God and to give Him full freedom to act in one’s soul!

135 During the third probation, the Lord gave me to understand that I should offer myself to Him so that He could do with me as He pleased. I was to remain standing before Him as a victim offering. At first, I was quite frightened, as I felt myself to be so utterly miserable and knew very well that this was the case. I answered the Lord once again, “I am misery itself; how can I be a hostage [for others]?” **You do not understand this today. Tomorrow, during your adoration, I will make it known to you.** My heart trembled, as did my soul, so deeply did these words sink into my soul. The word of God is living.

When I came to the adoration, I felt within my soul that I had entered the Temple of the living God, whose majesty is great and incomprehensible. And He made known to me what even the purest spirits are in His sight. Although I saw nothing externally, God’s presence pervaded me. At that very moment, my intellect was strangely illumined. A vision passed before the eyes of my soul; it was like the vision Jesus had in the Garden of Olives. First, the physical sufferings and all the circumstances that

would increase them; [then] the full scope of the spiritual sufferings and those that no one would know about. Everything entered into the vision: false suspicions, loss of good name. I've summarized it here, but this knowledge was already so clear that what I went through later on was in no way different from what I had known at that moment. My name is to be: "sacrifice."

When the vision ended, a cold sweat bathed my forehead. Jesus made it known to me that, even if I did not give my consent to this, I could still be saved; and He would not lessen His graces, but would still continue to have the same intimate relationship with me, so that even if I did not consent to make this sacrifice, God's generosity would not lessen thereby.

136 And the Lord gave me to know that the whole mystery depended on me, on my free consent to the sacrifice given with full use of my faculties. In this free and conscious act lies the whole power and value before His Majesty. Even if none of these things for which I offered myself would ever happen to me, before the Lord everything was as though it had already been **(64)** consummated.

At that moment, I realized I was entering into communion with the incomprehensible Majesty. I felt that God was waiting for my word, for my consent. Then my spirit immersed itself in the Lord, and I said, "Do with me as You please. I subject myself to Your will. As of today, Your holy will shall be my nourishment, and I will be faithful to Your commands with the help of Your grace. Do with me as You please. I beg You, O Lord, be with me at every moment of my life."

137 Suddenly, when I had consented to the sacrifice with all my heart and all my will, God's presence pervaded me. My soul became immersed in God and was inundated with such happiness that I cannot put in writing even the smallest part of it. I felt that His Majesty was enveloping me. I was extraordinarily fused with God. I saw that God was well pleased with me and, reciprocally, my spirit drowned itself in Him. Aware of this union with God, I felt I was especially loved and, in turn, I loved with all my soul. A great mystery took place during that adoration, a mystery between the Lord and myself. It seemed to me that I would die of love [at the sight of] His glance. I spoke much with the Lord, without uttering a

single word. And the Lord said to me, **You are the delight of My Heart; from today on, every one of your acts, even the very smallest, will be a delight to My eyes, whatever you do.** At that moment I felt transconsecrated. My earthly body was the same, but my soul was different; God was now living in it with the totality of His delight. This is not a feeling, but a conscious reality that nothing can obscure.

138 A great mystery has been accomplished between God and me. Courage and strength have remained in my soul. When the time of adoration came to an end, I came out and calmly faced everything I had feared so much before. When I came out into the corridor, a great suffering and humiliation, at the hands of a certain person, was awaiting me. I accepted it with submission to a higher will and snuggled closely to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, letting Him know that I was ready for that for which I had offered myself.

Suffering seemed to spring out of the ground. Even Mother Margaret herself was surprised. For others, many things passed unnoticed, for indeed it wasn't worth paying any attention to them; but in my case, nothing passed unnoticed; each word was analyzed, each step watched. One sister said to me, "Get ready, (65) Sister, to receive a small cross at the hands of Mother Superior. I feel sorry for you." But as for me, I rejoiced at this in the depths of my soul and had been ready for it for a long time. When she saw my courage, she was surprised. I see now that a soul cannot do much of itself, but with God it can do all things. Behold what God's grace can do. Few are the souls that are always watchful for divine graces, and even fewer of such souls who follow those inspirations faithfully.

139 Still, a soul which is faithful to God cannot confirm its own inspirations; it must submit them to the control of a very wise and learned priest; and until it is quite certain, it should remain distrustful. It should not, on its own initiative alone, put its trust in these inspirations and all other higher graces, because it can thus expose itself to great losses.

Even though a soul may immediately distinguish between false inspirations and those of God, it should nevertheless be careful, because many things are uncertain. God is pleased and rejoices when a soul distrusts Him for His own sake; because it loves Him, it is prudent and

itself asks and searches for help to make certain that it is really God who is acting within it. And once a well-instructed confessor has confirmed this, the soul should be at peace and give itself up to God, according to His directions; that is, according to the directions of the confessor.

140 Pure love is capable of great deeds, and it is not broken by difficulty or adversity. As it remains strong in the midst of great difficulties, so too it perseveres in the toilsome and drab life of each day. It knows that only one thing is needed to please God: to do even the smallest things out of great love — love, and always love.

Pure love never errs. Its light is strangely plentiful. It will not do anything that might displease God. It is ingenious at doing what is more pleasing to God, and no one will equal it. It is happy when it can empty itself and burn like a pure offering. The more it gives of itself, the happier it is. But also, no one can sense dangers from afar as can love; it knows how to unmask and also knows with whom it has to deal.

141 **(66)** + But my torments are coming to an end. The Lord is giving me the promised help. I can see it in two priests; namely, Father Andrasz and Father Sopocko. During the retreat before my perpetual vows,⁴⁴ I was set completely at peace for the first time [by Father Andrasz⁴⁵], and afterwards I was led in the same direction by Father Sopocko. This was the fulfillment of the Lord's promise.

142 When I was set at peace and taught how to follow God's paths, my spirit rejoiced in the Lord, and it seemed to me that I was running, not walking. My wings were spread for flight; I soared into the very heat of the sun, and I will not descend until I rest in Him, in whom my soul has lost itself forever. And I subjected myself totally to the action of grace. God stoops very low to my soul. I do not draw back, nor do I resist Him, but I lose myself in Him as my only treasure. I am one with the Lord. It is as if the gulf between us, Creator and creature, disappears. For a few days, my soul was in a state of continuous ecstasy. God's presence did not leave me for a single moment. And my soul remained in a continuous loving union with the Lord. But this in no way interfered with the performance of my duties. I felt I was transformed into love; I was all afire, but without being burned up. I lost myself in God unceasingly; God drew me to Himself so strongly and powerfully that sometimes I was not aware of

being on earth. I had impeded and feared God's grace for so long, and now God Himself, through Father Andrasz, has removed all difficulties. My spirit has been turned towards the Sun and has blossomed in His rays for Him alone; I understand no more... [The sentence breaks off here and begins a completely new thought in the next line.]

143 + I have wasted many of God's graces because I was always afraid of being deluded. God drew me to Himself so powerfully that often it was not in my power to resist His grace when I was suddenly immersed in Him. At these moments, Jesus filled me with such great peace that, later on, even when I tried to become uneasy, I could not do so. And then, I heard these words in my soul: **In order that you may be assured that it is I who am demanding all these things of you, I will give you such profound peace (67) that even if you wanted to feel troubled and frightened, it would not be in your power to do so today, but love will flood your soul to the point of self-oblivion.**

144 Later Jesus gave me another priest [Father Sopocko], before whom He ordered me to reveal my soul. At first I did so with a bit of hesitation, but a severe reprimand from Jesus brought about a deep humility within my soul. Under his direction, my soul made quick progress in the love of God, and many wishes of the Lord were carried out externally.⁴⁶ Many a time have I been astounded at his courage and his profound humility.

145 Oh, how wretched my soul is for having wasted so many graces! I was running away from God, and He pursued me with His graces. I most often experienced God's graces when I least expected them. From the moment He gave me a spiritual director, I have been more faithful to grace. Thanks to the director and his watchfulness over my soul, I have learned what guidance means and how Jesus looks at it. Jesus warned me of the least fault and stressed that He Himself judges the matter that I present to my confessor; and [He told me] that... **any transgressions against the confessor touch Me Myself.**

When, under his direction, my soul began to experience deep recollection and peace, I often heard these words in my soul: **Strengthen yourself for combat** — repeated over and over at various times.

+ Jesus often makes known to me what He does not like in my soul, and

He has more than once rebuked me for what seemed to be trifles, but which were, in fact, things of great importance. He has warned me and tried me like a Master. For many years, He Himself educated me, until the moment when He gave me a spiritual director. Previously, He Himself had made clear to me what I did not understand; but now, He tells me to ask my confessor about everything and often says, **I will answer you through his mouth. Be at peace. (68)** It has never happened to me that I have received an answer which was contrary to what the Lord wanted of me, when I presented it to the spiritual director [Father Sopocko]. It sometimes happens that Jesus first asks certain things of me, about which no one knows anything, and then, when I kneel at the confessional, my confessor gives me the same order — however, this is infrequent.

+ When, over a long period of time, a soul has received much light and many inspirations, and when the confessors have confirmed the source of these inspirations and set the soul at peace; if its love is great, Jesus now makes it known that it is time to put into action what it has received. The soul recognizes that God is counting on it, and this knowledge fortifies it. It knows that to be faithful it will often have to face various difficulties, but it trusts in God and, thanks to this trust, it reaches that point to which God is calling it. Difficulties do not terrify it; they are its daily bread, as it were. They do not frighten or terrify the soul, just as a warrior who is constantly in battle is not terrified by the roar of the cannon. Far from being frightened, it listens to determine from which side the enemy is launching his attack, in order to defeat him. It does nothing blindly, but examines and ponders everything deeply, and not counting on itself, it prays fervently and asks advice of other warriors who are experienced and wise. When the soul acts in this way, it nearly always wins.

There are attacks when a soul has no time to think or seek advice; then it must enter into a life-or-death struggle. Sometimes it is good to flee for cover in the wound of the Heart of Jesus, without answering a single word. By this very act the enemy is already defeated.

In time of peace, as well, the soul continues making efforts, just as in time of battle. It must exercise itself, and do so with energy; otherwise it has no chance of attaining victory. I regard the time of peace as a time of

preparation for victory. The soul must be ever watchful; watchfulness and again, watchfulness. The soul that reflects receives much light. A distracted soul runs the risk of a fall, and let it not be surprised when it does fall. O Spirit of God, Director of the soul, wise is he whom You have trained! But for the Spirit of God to act in the soul, peace and recollection are needed.

146 **(69)** Prayer. — A soul arms itself by prayer for all kinds of combat. In whatever state the soul may be, it ought to pray. A soul which is pure and beautiful must pray, or else it will lose its beauty; a soul which is striving after this purity must pray, or else it will never attain it; a soul which is newly converted must pray, or else it will fall again; a sinful soul, plunged in sins, must pray so that it might rise again. There is no soul which is not bound to pray, for every single grace comes to the soul through prayer.

147 I recall that I have received most light during adoration which I made lying prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament for half an hour every day throughout Lent. During that time I came to know myself and God more profoundly. And yet, even though I had the superiors' permission to do so, I encountered many obstacles to praying in such a way. Let the soul be aware that, in order to pray and persevere in prayer, one must arm oneself with patience and cope bravely with exterior and interior difficulties. The interior difficulties are discouragement, dryness, heaviness of spirit and temptations. The exterior difficulties are human respect and time; one must observe the time set apart for prayer. This has been my personal experience because, when I did not pray at the time assigned for prayer, later on I could not do it because of my duties; or if I did manage to do so, this was only with great difficulty, because my thoughts kept wandering off to my duties. I also experienced this difficulty: when a soul has prayed well and left prayer in a state of profound interior recollection, others resist its recollection; and so, the soul must be patient to persevere in prayer. It often happened to me that when my soul was more deeply immersed in God, and I had derived greater fruit from prayer, and God's presence accompanied me during the day, and at work there was more recollection and greater precision and effort at my duty, this was precisely when I received the most rebukes for being negligent in my duty and indifferent to everything; because less

recollected souls want others to be like them, for they are a constant [source of] remorse to them.

148 (70) + A noble and delicate soul, even the most simple, but one of delicate sensibilities, sees God in everything, finds Him everywhere, and knows how to find Him in even the most hidden things. It finds all things important, it highly appreciates all things, it thanks God for all things, it draws profit for the soul from all things, and it gives all glory to God. It places its trust in God and is not confused when the time of ordeals comes. It knows that God is always the best of Fathers and makes little of human opinion. It follows faithfully the faintest breath of the Holy Spirit; it rejoices in this Spiritual Guest and holds onto Him like a child to its mother. Where other souls come to a standstill and fear, this soul passes on without fear or difficulty.

149 When the Lord himself wants to be close to a soul and to lead it, He will remove everything that is external. When I fell ill and was taken to the infirmary, I suffered much unpleasantness because of this. There were two of us sick in the infirmary. Sisters would come to see Sister N., but no one came to visit me. It is true that there was only one infirmary, but each one had her own cell. The winter nights were long, and Sister N. had the light and the radio headphones, while I could not even prepare my meditation for lack of a light.

When nearly two weeks had passed in this way, I complained to the Lord one evening that I was suffering so much and that I could not even prepare my meditation because there was no light. And the Lord said that He would come every evening and give me the points for the next day's meditation. These points always concerned His sorrowful Passion. He would say, **Consider My sufferings before Pilate.** And thus, point by point, I meditated upon His sorrowful Passion for one week. From that moment, a great joy entered my soul, and I no longer wanted either the visitors or the light; Jesus sufficed me for everything. The superiors were indeed very solicitous for the sick, but the Lord ordained that I should feel forsaken. This best of masters withdraws every created thing in order that He Himself might act. Many a time, I have experienced such sufferings and persecutions that Mother M. [probably Mother Margaret] herself said to me, "Sister, along your path, sufferings just spring up out

of the ground. I look upon you, (71) Sister, as one crucified. But I can see that Jesus has a hand in this. Be faithful to the Lord.”

150 + I want to write down a dream that I had about Saint Therese of the Child Jesus. I was still a novice at the time and was going through some difficulties which I did not know how to overcome. They were interior difficulties connected with exterior ones. I made novenas to various saints, but the situation grew more and more difficult. The sufferings it caused me were so great that I did not know how to go on living, but suddenly the thought occurred to me that I should pray to Saint Therese of the Child Jesus. I started a novena to this Saint, because before entering the convent I had had a great devotion to her. Lately, I had somewhat neglected this devotion, but in my need I began again to pray with great fervor.

On the fifth day of the novena, I dreamed of Saint Therese, but it was as if she were still living on earth. She hid from me the fact that she was a saint and began to comfort me, saying that I should not be worried about this matter, but should trust more in God. She said, “I suffered greatly, too,” but I did not quite believe her and said, “It seems to me that you have not suffered at all.” But Saint Therese answered me in a convincing manner that she had suffered very much indeed and said to me, “Sister, know that in three days the difficulty will come to a happy conclusion.” When I was not very willing to believe her, she revealed to me that she was a saint. At that moment, a great joy filled my soul, and I said to her, “You are a saint?” “Yes,” she answered, “I am a saint. Trust that this matter will be resolved in three days.” And I said, “Dear sweet Therese, tell me, shall I go to heaven?” And she answered, “Yes, you will go to heaven, Sister.” “And will I be a saint?” To which she replied, “Yes, you will be a saint.” “But, little Therese, shall I be a saint as you are, raised to the altar?” And she answered, “Yes, you will be a saint just as I am, but you must trust in the Lord Jesus.” I then asked her if my mother and father would go to heaven, will [unfinished sentence] (72) And she replied that they would. I further asked, “And will my brothers and sisters go to heaven?” She told me to pray hard for them, but gave me no definite answer. I understood that they were in need of much prayer.

This was a dream. And as the proverb goes, dreams are phantoms; God is

faith. Nevertheless, three days later the difficulty was solved very easily, just as she had said. And everything in this affair turned out exactly as she said it would. It was a dream, but it had its significance.

151 + Once, when I was in the kitchen with Sister N.,⁴⁷ she got a little upset with me and, as a punishment, ordered me to sit on the table while she herself continued to work hard, cleaning and scrubbing. And while I was sitting there, the sisters came along and were astounded to find me sitting on the table, and each one had her say. One said that I was a loafer and another, “What an eccentric!” I was a postulant at the time. Others said, “What kind of a sister will she make?” Still, I could not get down because sister had ordered me to sit there by virtue of obedience⁴⁸ until she told me to get down. Truly, God alone knows how many acts of self-denial it took. I thought I’d die of shame. God often allowed such things for the sake of my inner formation, but He compensated me for this humiliation by a great consolation. During Benediction I saw Him in great beauty. Jesus looked at me kindly and said, **My daughter, do not be afraid of sufferings; I am with you.**

152 Once, I had night duty,⁴⁹ and I was suffering greatly in spirit because of the painting of the image, and I no longer knew which way to turn because they were constantly trying to convince me that the whole thing was an illusion. On the other hand, one priest said that perhaps God wanted to be worshiped through this image and therefore I ought to try to get it painted. Meanwhile, my soul was becoming extremely exhausted. When I entered the little chapel, I brought my head close to the tabernacle, knocked (73) and said, “Jesus, look at the great difficulties I am having because of the painting of this image.” And I heard a voice from the tabernacle, **My daughter, your sufferings will not last much longer.**

153 One day, I saw two roads. One was broad, covered with sand and flowers, full of joy, music and all sorts of pleasures. People walked along it, dancing and enjoying themselves. They reached the end without realizing it. And at the end of the road there was a horrible precipice; that is, the abyss of hell. The souls fell blindly into it; as they walked, so they fell. And their number was so great that it was impossible to count them. And I saw the other road, or rather, a path, for it was narrow and strewn

with thorns and rocks; and the people who walked along it had tears in their eyes, and all kinds of suffering befell them. Some fell down upon the rocks, but stood up immediately and went on. At the end of the road there was a magnificent garden filled with all sorts of happiness, and all these souls entered there. At the very first instant they forgot all their sufferings.

154 Once, when there was adoration at the convent of the Sisters of the Holy Family,⁵⁰ I went there in the evening with one of our sisters. As soon as I entered the chapel, the presence of God filled my soul. I prayed as I do at certain times, without saying a word. Suddenly, I saw the Lord, who said to me, **Know that if you neglect the matter of the painting of the image and the whole work of mercy, you will have to answer for a multitude of souls on the day of judgment.** After these words of Our Lord, a certain fear filled my soul, and alarm took hold of me. Try as I would, I could not calm myself. These words kept resounding in my ears: So, I will not only have to answer for myself on the day of judgment, but also for the souls of others. These words cut deep into my heart. When I returned home, I went to the little Jesus,⁵¹ fell on my face before the Blessed Sacrament and said to the Lord, “I will do everything in my power, but I beg You to be always with me and to give me strength to do Your holy will; for You can do everything, while I can do nothing of myself.”

155 (74) + It has happened to me for some time now that I immediately sense in my soul when someone is praying for me; and I likewise sense it in my soul when some soul asks me for prayer, even though they do not speak to me about it. The feeling is one of certain disquiet, as if someone were calling me; and when I pray I obtain peace.

156 + Once, I desired very much to receive Holy Communion, but I had a certain doubt, and I did not go. I suffered greatly because of this. It seemed to me that my heart would burst from the pain. When I set about my work, my heart full of bitterness, Jesus suddenly stood by me and said, **My daughter, do not omit Holy Communion unless you know well that your fall was serious; apart from this, no doubt must stop you from uniting yourself with Me in the mystery of My love. Your minor faults will disappear in My love like a piece of straw thrown**

into a great furnace. Know that you grieve Me much when you fail to receive Me in Holy Communion.

157 + In the evening, when I entered the small chapel, I heard these words in my soul: **My daughter, consider these words: “And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly.”** When I started to think about them more deeply, much light streamed into my soul. I learned how much we need perseverance in prayer and that our salvation often depends on such difficult prayer.

158 + When I was at Kiekrz [1930] to replace one of the sisters⁵² for a short time, I went across the garden one afternoon and stopped on the shore of the lake; I stood there for a long time, contemplating my surroundings. Suddenly, I saw the Lord Jesus near me, and He graciously said to me, **All this I created for you, My spouse; and know that all this beauty is nothing compared to what I have prepared for you in eternity.** My soul was inundated with such consolation that I stayed there until evening, and it seemed to me like a brief moment. That was my free day, set apart for a one-day retreat,⁵³

(75) so I was quite free to devote myself to prayer. Oh, how the infinitely good God pursues us with His goodness! It often happens that the Lord grants me the greatest graces when I do not at all expect them.

159 + O Blessed Host, in golden chalice enclosed for me,
That through the vast wilderness of exile
I may pass — pure, immaculate, undefiled;
Oh, grant that through the power of Your love this might come to be.

O Blessed Host, take up Your dwelling within my soul,
O Thou my heart's purest love!
With Your brilliance the darkness dispel.
Refuse not Your grace to a humble heart.
O Blessed Host, enchantment of all heaven,
Though Your beauty be veiled
And captured in a crumb of bread,
Strong faith tears away that veil.

160 + The crusade day,⁵⁴ which is the fifth of the month, happened to fall on

the First Friday of the month. This was my day for keeping watch before the Lord Jesus. It was my duty to make amends to the Lord for all offenses and acts of disrespect and to pray that, on this day, no sacrilege be committed. This day, my spirit was set aflame with special love for the Eucharist. It seemed to me that I was transformed into a blazing fire. When I was about to receive Holy Communion, a second Host fell onto the priest's sleeve, and I did not know which host I was to receive. After I had hesitated for a moment, the priest made an impatient gesture with his hand to tell me I should receive the Host. When I took the Host he gave me, the other one fell onto my hands. The priest went along the altar rail to distribute Communion, and I held the Lord Jesus in my hands all that time. When the priest approached me again, I raised the Host for him to put it back into the chalice, because when I had first received Jesus I could not speak before consuming the Host, and so could not tell him that the other had fallen. But while I was holding the Host **(76)** in my hand, I felt such a power of love that for the rest of the day I could neither eat nor come to my senses. I heard these words from the Host: **I desired to rest in your hands, not only in your heart.** And at that moment I saw the little Jesus. But when the priest approached, I saw once again only the Host.

161 O Mary, Immaculate Virgin,
Pure crystal for my heart,
You are my strength, O secure anchor,
You are a shield and protection for a weak heart.

O Mary, you are pure and unparalleled,
Virgin and Mother at one and the same time;
You're beautiful as the sun, by nothing defiled.
Nothing is worthy of comparison to the image of Your soul.

Your beauty enthralled the Thrice-Holy One's eye,
That He came down from heaven, forsaking th'eternal See's throne,
And assumed from Your Heart Body and Blood,
Hiding for nine months in the Virgin's Heart.

O Mother, Virgin, this will no one comprehend,
That the infinite God is becoming a man;
It's only love's and His inscrutable mercy's purpose.

Through You, Mother — it's given us to live with Him for ever.

O Mary, Virgin Mother and Heaven's Gate,
Through You salvation came to us;
Every grace to us streams forth through Your hands,
And faithful imitation of You only will sanctify me.

O Mother, Virgin — most beautiful Lily.
Your Heart was for Jesus the first tabernacle on earth,
And that, because Your humility was the deepest,
Wherefore You were raised above Angel choirs and Saints.

O Mary, my sweet Mother,
To You I turn over my soul, my body and my poor heart.
Be the safeguard of my life,
Especially at death's hour, in the final fight.

162 (77) J.M.J. Jesus, I trust in You. January 1, 1937

Chart of internal control of the soul. Particular examen — to be united with the merciful Christ. Practice: inner silence, strict observance of silence.

The Conscience

January: God and the soul; silence. Victories 41, falls 4.
Exclamatory Prayer: But Jesus remained silent.

February: God and the soul; silence. Victories 36, falls 3.
Exclamatory Prayer: Jesus, I trust in You.

March: God and the soul; silence. Victories 51, falls 2.
Exclamatory Prayer. Jesus, enkindle my heart with love.

April: God and the soul; silence. Victories 61, falls 4.
Exclamatory Prayer. With God, I can do all things.

May: God and the soul; silence. Victories 92, falls 3.
Exclamatory Prayer. In His Name is my strength.

June: God and the soul; silence. Victories 64, falls 1.
Exclamatory Prayer: All for Jesus.

July: God and the soul; silence. Victories 62, falls 8.

Exclamatory Prayer: Jesus, rest in my heart.

August: God and the soul; silence. Victories 88, falls 7.

Exclamatory Prayer: Jesus, You know...

September: God and the soul; silence. Victories 99, falls 1.

Exclamatory Prayer: Jesus, hide me in Your Heart.

October: God and the soul; silence. Victories 41, falls 3.

Exclamatory Prayer: Mary, unite me with Jesus.

November: God and the soul; silence. Victories, falls.

Exclamatory Prayer: O my Jesus, have mercy!

December: God and the soul; silence. Victories, falls.

Exclamatory Prayer. Hail, living Host!

163 **(78)** JMJ The Year 1937

General Exercises

+ O Most Holy Trinity! As many times as I breathe, as many times as my heart beats, as many times as my blood pulsates through my body, so many thousand times do I want to glorify Your mercy.

+ I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection, O Lord. May the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbors' souls and come to their rescue.

Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbors' needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings.

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbor, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbors and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbor, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbor. I will refuse my heart to no one. I will be sincere even with those who, I know, will abuse my kindness. And I will lock myself up in the most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in silence. May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.

+ You Yourself command me to exercise the three degrees of mercy. The first: the act of mercy, of whatever kind. The second: the word of mercy — if I cannot carry out a work of mercy, I will assist by my words. The third: prayer — if I cannot show mercy by deeds or words, I can always do so by prayer. My prayer reaches out even there where I cannot reach out physically.

O my Jesus, transform me into Yourself, for you can do all things.

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164 (83) + JMJ Warsaw, 1933.

Probation Before Perpetual Vows⁵⁶

When I learned I was to go for probation, my heart beat with joy at the thought of such an immense grace, that of the perpetual vows. I went before the Blessed Sacrament; and when I immersed myself in a prayer of thanksgiving, I heard these words in my soul: **My child you are My delight, you are the comfort of My Heart. I grant you as many graces as you can hold. As often as you want to make Me happy, speak to the world about My great and unfathomable mercy.**

165 A few weeks before I was told about the probation, I entered the chapel for a moment and Jesus said to me **At this very moment the superiors are deciding which sisters are going to take perpetual vows. Not all of**

them will be granted this grace, but this is their own fault. He who does not take advantage of small graces will not receive great ones. But to you, my child, this grace is being given. My soul was seized with joyful surprise, because a few days earlier one of the sisters had said to me, “Sister, you will not be going for the third probation. I myself will see to it that you will not be permitted to make your vows.” I said nothing to the sister, but felt great pain which I tried to conceal as best I could.

O Jesus, how strange are Your ways! I now see that people can do very little on their own, for I did make my probation, as Jesus had told me.

166 In prayer I always find light and strength of spirit although there are moments so trying and hurtful, that it is sometimes difficult to imagine that these things can happen in a convent. Strangely, God sometimes allows them, but always in order to manifest or develop virtue in a soul. That is the reason for trials.

167 **(84)** Today [November, 1932], I arrived in Warsaw for the third probation. After a cordial meeting with the dear Mothers, I went into the small chapel for a moment. Suddenly God’s presence filled my soul, and I heard these words, **My daughter, I desire that your heart be formed after the model of My merciful Heart. You must be completely imbued with My mercy.**

Dear Mother Directress [Margaret]

at once asked me whether I had had a retreat that year, and I said no. “Then you must first have a retreat of at least three days.”

Thanks be to God there was at Walendow⁵⁷ an eight-day retreat in which I could take part. But difficulties arose in regard to my leaving for this retreat. A certain person opposed my going very much, and it already [appeared that] I was not to go. After dinner, I went into the chapel for a five-minute adoration. Suddenly I saw the Lord Jesus, who said to me, **My daughter, I am preparing many graces for you, which you will receive during this retreat which you will begin tomorrow.** I answered, “Jesus, the retreat has already begun, and I am not supposed to go.” And He said to me, **Get ready for it, because you will begin the retreat tomorrow. And as for your departure, I will arrange that**

with the superiors. And in an instant, Jesus disappeared.

I began to wonder how this was going to happen. But after a moment I rejected all such thoughts and devoted the time I had to prayer, begging the Holy Spirit for light to see the whole misery that I am. After a short while, I left the little chapel to go about my duties. Soon Mother General [Michael] called me and said, "Sister, you will go to Walendow today with Mother Valeria so that you can start the retreat tomorrow. Fortunately, Mother Valeria happens to be here and you can go together." Within two hours I was already in Walendow. I reflected for a moment within myself and recognized that only Jesus can arrange things in such a way.

168 **(85)** When the person who so strongly opposed my participation in the retreat saw me, she showed surprise and dissatisfaction. Paying no heed to this, I greeted her affectionately and went to visit the Lord, in order to learn how I should conduct myself during the retreat.

169 My conversation with the Lord Jesus before the retreat. Jesus told me that this retreat would be a little different from others. **You shall strive to maintain a profound peace in respect to your communings with Me. I will remove all doubts in this regard. I know that you are at peace now as I speak to you, but the moment I stop talking you will start looking for doubts. But I want you to know that I will affirm your soul to such a degree that even if you wanted to be troubled, it will not be within your power. And as a proof that it is I who am speaking to you, you will go to confession on the second day of the retreat to the priest who is preaching the retreat; you will go to him as soon as he has finished his conference and will present to him all your doubts concerning Me. I will answer you through his lips, and then your fears will end. During this retreat, observe such strict silence that it will be as though nothing exists around you. You shall speak only to Me and to your confessor; you will ask your superiors only for penances.** I felt immense joy that the Lord would show me such kindness and lower himself so much for my sake.

170 The first day of the retreat. I tried to be the first in the chapel in the morning; before the meditation I had a bit of time for prayer to the Holy Spirit and to Our Lady. I earnestly begged the Mother of God to obtain

for me the grace of fidelity to these inner inspirations and of faithfully carrying out God's will, whatever it might be. I began this retreat with a very special kind of courage.

171 **(86)** Struggle to keep silence. As usual, sisters from various houses came to the retreat. One of the sisters whom I had not seen for a long time, came to my cell and said she had something to tell me. I did not answer her, and she saw that I did not want to break silence. She said to me, "I didn't know you were such an eccentric, sister," and she went away. I was well aware that she had no other business with me than to satisfy her own curious self-love. O God, preserve me in faithfulness.

172 The father⁵⁸ who preached the retreat came from America. He had come to Poland for only a short time, and it so happened that he conducted our retreat. A deep interior life was reflected from his person. His bearing testified to the greatness of his spirit. Mortification and recollection characterized this priest, But despite these great virtues, I experienced much difficulty in revealing my soul to him in regard to graces received; as for sins, it is always easy to do so, but in respect to graces I really have to make a great effort, and even then I do not tell everything.

173 Satan's temptations during meditation. I felt a strange fear that the priest would not understand me, or that he would have no time to hear everything I would have to say. How am I going to tell him all this? If it were Father Bukowski I could do it more easily, but this Jesuit whom I am seeing for the first time... Then I remembered Father Bukowski's advice that I should at least take brief notes of the lights sent to me by God during the retreats and give him at least a brief report on them. My God, for a day and a half all has gone well, and now a life and death struggle is beginning. The conference is to start in a half hour, and then I am to go to confession.

Satan tried to persuade me into believing that if my superiors have told me that my inner life is an illusion, why should I ask again (87) and trouble the confessor? Didn't M.X. [probably Mother Jane] tell you that the Lord Jesus does not commune with souls as miserable as yours? This confessor is going to tell you the same thing. Why speak to him about all this? These are not sins, and Mother X. told you that all this communing with the Lord Jesus was daydreaming and pure hysteria. So why tell it to

this confessor? You would do better to dismiss all this as illusions. Look how many humiliations you have suffered because of them, and how many more are still awaiting you, and all the sisters know that you are a hysteric. “Jesus!” I called out with all the strength of my soul.

174 At that moment the priest came in and began the conference. He spoke for a short time, as if he were in a hurry. After the conference, he went over to the confessional. Seeing that none of the sisters were going there, I sprang from my kneeler, and in an instant was in the confessional. There was no time to deliberate. Instead of telling the father about the doubts that had been sown in me in respect to my dealings with the Lord Jesus, I began to speak about these temptations I have just described above. The confessor immediately understood my situation and said, “Sister, you distrust the Lord Jesus because He treats you so kindly. Well, Sister, be completely at peace. Jesus is your Master, and your communing with Him is neither daydreaming nor hysteria nor illusion. Know that you are on the right path. Please try to be faithful to these graces; you are not free to shun them. You do not need at all, Sister, to tell your superiors about these interior graces, unless the Lord Jesus instructs you clearly to do so, and even then you should first consult with your confessor. But if the Lord Jesus demands something external, in this case, after consulting your confessor, you should carry out what He asks of you, even if this costs you greatly. On the other hand, you must tell your confessor everything. There is absolutely no other course for you to take, Sister. Pray that (88) you may find a spiritual director, or else you will waste these great gifts of God. I repeat once again, be at peace; you are following the right path. Take no heed of anything else, but always be faithful to the Lord Jesus, no matter what anyone says about you. It is with just such miserable souls that the Lord Jesus communes in this intimate way. And the more you humble yourself, the more the Lord Jesus will unite Himself with you.”

175 When I left the confessional, ineffable joy filled my soul, so that I withdrew to a secluded spot in the garden to hide myself from the sisters to allow my heart to pour itself out to God. God’s presence penetrated me and, in an instant, all my nothingness was drowned in God; and at the same moment I felt, or rather discerned, the Three Divine Persons dwelling in me. And I had such great peace in my soul that I myself was

surprised that I could have had so many misgivings.

176 + Resolution: Faithfulness to inner inspirations, even though I would have no idea how much I would have to pay for it. I must do nothing on my own without first consulting the confessor.

177 + Renewal of vows. From the moment I woke up in the morning, my spirit was totally submerged in God, in that ocean of love. I felt that I had been completely immersed in Him. During Holy Mass, my love for Him reached a peak of intensity. After the renewal of vows and Holy Communion, I suddenly saw the Lord Jesus, who said to me with great kindness, **My daughter, look at My merciful Heart.** As I fixed my gaze on the Most Sacred Heart, the same rays of light, as are represented in the image as blood and water, came forth from it, and I understood how great is the Lord's mercy. And again Jesus said to me with kindness, **My daughter, speak to priests about this inconceivable mercy of Mine. The flames of mercy are burning Me — clamoring to be spent; I want to keep pouring them out upon souls; souls just don't want to believe in My goodness.** Suddenly Jesus disappeared. But throughout that whole day my spirit remained immersed (89) in God's tangible presence, despite the buzz and chatter that usually follow a retreat. It did not disturb me in the least. My spirit was in God, although externally I took part in the conversations and even went to visit Derdy.⁵⁹

178 Today we are beginning the third probation. All three of us met at Mother Margaret's, as the other sisters were having their probation in the novitiate. Mother Margaret began with a prayer, explained to us what the third probation consists of, and then spoke on how great is the grace of the perpetual vows. Suddenly, I began to cry out loud. In an instant all God's graces appeared before the eyes of my soul, and I saw myself so wretched and ungrateful toward God. The sisters began to rebuke me, saying, "Why did she break out crying?" But Mother Margaret came to my defense, saying that she was not surprised.

At the end of the hour, I went before the Blessed Sacrament and, like the greatest and most miserable of wretches, I begged for His mercy that He might heal and purify my poor soul. Then I heard these words, **My daughter, all your miseries have been consumed in the flame of My love, like a little twig thrown into a roaring fire. By humbling**

yourself in this way, you draw upon yourself and upon other souls an entire sea of My mercy. I answered, “Jesus, mold my poor heart according to Your divine delight. ”

179 Throughout the third probation it was my duty to help the sister in the vestiary.⁶⁰ This duty gave me many occasions to practice virtues. Sometimes I had to take linen to certain sisters three times and still one could not satisfy them. But I also came to recognize the great virtues of some sisters who always asked **(90)** for the poorest things from the vestiary. I admired their spirit of humility and mortification.

180 + During Advent, a great yearning for God arose in my soul. My spirit rushed toward God with all its might. During that time, the Lord gave me much light to know His attributes.

The first attribute which the Lord gave me to know is His holiness. His holiness is so great that all the Powers and Virtues tremble before Him. The pure spirits veil their faces and lose themselves in unending adoration, and with one single word they express the highest form of adoration; that is — Holy... The holiness of God is poured out upon the Church of God and upon every living soul in it, but not in the same degree. There are souls who are completely penetrated by God, and there are those who are barely alive.

The second kind of knowledge which the Lord granted me concerns His justice. His justice is so great and penetrating that it reaches deep into the heart of things, and all things stand before Him in naked truth, and nothing can withstand Him.

The third attribute is love and mercy. And I understood that the greatest attribute is love and mercy. It unites the creature with the Creator. This immense love and abyss of mercy are made known in the Incarnation of the Word and in the Redemption [of humanity], and it is here that I saw this as the greatest of all God’s attributes.

181 Today I was cleaning the room of one of the sisters. Although I was trying to clean it with utmost care, she kept following me all the time and saying, “You’ve left a speck of dust here and a spot on the floor there.” At each of her remarks I did each place over a dozen times **(91)** just to

satisfy her. It is not work that makes me tired, but all this talking and excessive demands. My whole day's martyrdom was not enough for her, so she went to the Directress and complained, "Mother, who is this careless sister who doesn't know how to work quickly?" The next day, I went again to do the same job, without trying to explain myself. When she started driving me, I thought, "Jesus, one can be a silent martyr; it is not the work that wears you out, but this kind of martyrdom."

182 I learned that certain people have a special gift for vexing others. They try you as best they can. The poor soul that falls into their hands can do nothing right; her best efforts are maliciously criticized.

+ Christmas Eve.

Today I was closely united with the Mother of God. I relived her interior sentiments. In the evening, before the ceremony of the breaking of the wafer, I went into the chapel to break the wafer, in spirit, with my loved ones, and I asked the Mother of God for graces for them. My spirit was totally steeped in God. During the Midnight Mass ["Pasterka" or Shepherds' Mass], I saw the Child Jesus in the Host, and my spirit was immersed in Him. Although He was a tiny Child, His majesty penetrated my soul. I was permeated to the depths of my being by this mystery, this great abasement on the part of God, this inconceivable emptying of Himself. These sentiments remained vividly alive in my soul all through the festive season. Oh, we shall never comprehend this great self-abasement on the part of God; the more I think of it, [unfinished thought].

183 One morning after Holy Communion, I heard this voice, **I desire that you accompany Me when I go to the sick.** I answered that I was quite willing, but after a moment of reflection I started wondering how I was going to do so; the sisters of the second choir⁶¹ do not accompany the Blessed Sacrament. It is always the sister-directresses who go. (92) I thought to myself: Jesus will find a way. Shortly afterwards, Mother Raphael sent for me and said, "Sister, you will accompany the Lord Jesus when the priest goes to visit the sick." And all through the time of my probation I carried the light, accompanying the Lord and, as a knight of Jesus, I always tried to gird myself with an iron belt,⁶² for it would not be proper to accompany the King in everyday dress. And I offered this mortification for the sick.

184 +Holy Hour. During this hour, I tried to meditate on the Lord's Passion. But my soul was filled with joy, and suddenly I saw the Child Jesus. But His majesty penetrated me to such an extent that I said, "Jesus, You are so little, and yet I know that You are my Creator and Lord." And Jesus answered me, **I am, and I keep company with you as a child to teach you humility and simplicity.**

I gathered all my sufferings and difficulties into a bouquet for Jesus for the day of our perpetual betrothal. Nothing was difficult for me, when I remembered it was for my Betrothed as proof of my love for Him.

185 + My silence for Jesus. I strove after great silence for Jesus. Amidst the greatest din, Jesus always found silence in my heart, although it sometimes cost me a lot. But what can be too great for Jesus, for Him whom I love with all the strength of my heart?

186 + Today Jesus said to me, **I desire that you know more profoundly the love that burns in My Heart for souls, and you will understand this when you meditate upon My Passion. Call upon My mercy on behalf of sinners; I desire their (93) salvation. When you say this prayer, with a contrite heart and with faith on behalf of some sinner, I will give him the grace of conversion. This is the prayer:**

187 **"O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You."**

188 During the last days of the carnival, when I was making a Holy Hour, I saw how the Lord Jesus suffered as He was being scourged. Oh, such an inconceivable agony! How terribly Jesus suffered during the scourging! O poor sinners, on the day of judgment how will you face the Jesus whom you are now torturing so cruelly: His blood flowed to the ground, and in some places His flesh started to fall off. I saw a few bare bones on His back. The meek Jesus moaned softly and sighed.

189 On one occasion, Jesus gave me to know how pleasing to Him is the soul that faithfully keeps the rule. A soul will receive a greater reward for observing the rule than for penances and great mortifications. The latter will be rewarded also if they are undertaken over and above the rule, but they will not surpass the rule.

190 Once during an adoration, the Lord demanded that I give myself up to Him as an offering, by bearing a certain suffering in atonement, not only for the sins of the world in general, but specifically for transgressions committed in this house. Immediately I said, "Very good; I am ready." But Jesus gave me to see what I was going to suffer, and in one moment the whole passion unfolded itself before my eyes. Firstly, my intentions will not be recognized; there will be all kinds of suspicion and distrust as well as various kinds of humiliations and adversities. I will not mention everything here. (94) All these things stood before my soul's eye like a dark storm from which lightning was ready to strike at any moment, waiting only for my consent. For a moment, my nature was frightened. Then suddenly the dinner bell rang. I left the chapel, trembling and undecided. But the sacrifice was ever present before me, for I had neither decided to accept it, nor had I refused the Lord. I wanted to place myself completely in His will. If the Lord Jesus Himself were to impose it on me, I was ready. But Jesus gave me to know that I myself was to give my free consent and accept it with full consciousness, or else it would be meaningless. Its whole power was contained in my free act before God. But at the same time, Jesus gave me to understand that the decision was completely within my power. I could do it or not do it. And so I then answered immediately, "Jesus, I accept everything that You wish to send me; I trust in Your goodness." At that moment, I felt that by this act I glorified God greatly. But I armed myself with patience. As soon as I left the chapel, I had an encounter with reality. I do not want to describe the details, but there was as much of it as I was able to bear. I would not have been able to bear even one drop more.

191 +One morning I heard these words in my soul: **Go to Mother General [Michael] and tell her that this thing displeases Me in such and such a house.** I cannot mention what the thing was nor the house in question, but I did tell it to Mother General, although it cost me very much.

192 Once, I took upon myself a terrible temptation which one of our students in the house at Warsaw was going through. It was the temptation of suicide. For seven days I suffered; and after the seven days Jesus granted her the grace which was being asked, and then my suffering also ceased. It was a great suffering. I often take upon myself the torments of our students. Jesus permits me to do this, and so do my confessors.

193 **(95)** My heart is a permanent dwelling place for Jesus. No one but Jesus has access to it. It is from Jesus that I derive strength to fight difficulties and oppositions. I want to be transformed into Jesus in order to be able to give myself completely to souls. Without Jesus I would not get near to souls, because I know what I am of myself. I absorb God into myself in order to give Him to souls.

194 +March 27. I desire to struggle, toil and empty myself for our work of saving immortal souls. It does not matter if these efforts should shorten my life; it is no longer mine, but belongs to the Community. I want to be useful to the whole Church by being faithful to my Community.

195 O Jesus, today my soul is as though darkened by suffering. Not a single ray of light. The storm is raging, and Jesus is asleep. O my Master, I will not wake You; I will not interrupt Your sweet sleep. I believe that You fortify me without my knowing it.

Throughout the long hours I adore You, O living Bread, amidst the great drought in my soul. O Jesus, pure Love, I do not need consolations; I am nourished by Your will, O Mighty One! Your will is the goal of my existence. It seems to me that the whole world serves me and depends on me. You, O Lord, understand my soul with all its aspirations.

Jesus, when I myself cannot sing You the hymn of love, I admire the singing of the Seraphim, they who are so dearly loved by You. I desire to drown myself in You as they do. Nothing will stem such love, for no might has power over it. It is like lightning that illuminates the darkness, (96) but does not remain in it. O my Master, shape my soul according to Your will and Your eternal designs!

196 A certain person seems to have made it her task to try out my virtue in all sorts of ways. One day, she stopped me in the corridor and began by saying that she had no grounds for rebuking me, but she ordered me to stand there opposite the small chapel⁶³ for half an hour and to wait for Mother Superior, who was to pass by there after recreation,⁶⁴ and I was to accuse myself of various things which she had told me to say. Although I had no idea of these things being on my soul, I was obedient and waited for Mother Superior for a full half hour. Each sister who passed by looked at me with a smile. When I accused myself before Mother

Superior [Raphael], she sent me to my confessor. When I made my confession, the priest saw immediately that this was something that did not come from my own soul and that I had not the faintest idea of such things. He was very surprised that this person had dared to take upon herself to give such orders.

197 O Church of God, you are the best mother, you alone can rear a soul and cause it to grow. Oh, how great is my love and respect for the Church, that best of all mothers!

198 On one occasion the Lord said to me, **My daughter, your confidence and love restrain My justice, and I cannot inflict punishment because you hinder Me from doing so.** Oh, how great is the power of a soul filled with confidence!

199 When I think of my perpetual vows and Who it is that wants to be joined with me, for hours I become absorbed in the thought of Him. How can this be; You are God and I — I am Your creature. You, the Immortal King and I, a beggar and misery itself! But now all is clear to me; (97) Your grace and Your love, O Lord, will fill the gulf between You, Jesus, and me.

200 O Jesus, how deeply it hurts the soul when it is always trying to be sincere and they accuse it of hypocrisy and behave with mistrust toward it. O Jesus, You also suffered like this to make satisfaction to Your Father.

201 I want to hide myself so that no creature might know my heart. Jesus, You alone know my heart and possess it whole and entire. No one knows our secret. We understand each other mutually with one look. From the moment we came to know each other I have been happy. Your greatness is my fullness. O Jesus, when I am in the last place, lower than the postulants, even the youngest of them, then I feel that I am in my proper place. I did not know that the Lord had put so much happiness in these drab little corners. Now I understand that even in prison there can burst forth from a pure heart the fullness of love for You, O Lord! External things mean nothing to pure love; it cuts through them all. Neither prison doors nor the gates of heaven are strong enough to stop it. It reaches God Himself, and nothing can quench it. It knows no obstacles; it is free like a

queen and has free access to all places. Death itself must bow its head before it....

202 My sister [Wanda⁶⁵] came to see me today. When she told me of her plans, I was horror-stricken. How is such a thing possible? Such a beautiful little soul before the Lord, and yet, great darkness had come over her, and she did not know how to help herself. She had a dark view of everything. The good God entrusted her to my care, and for two weeks I was able to work with her. But how many sacrifices this soul cost me is known only to God. For no other soul did I bring so many sacrifices and sufferings and prayers before the throne of God as I did for her soul. (98) I felt that I had forced God to grant her grace. When I reflect on all this, I see that it was truly a miracle. Now I can see how much power intercessory prayer has before God.

203 Now, during this Lent, I often experience the Passion of the Lord Jesus in my own body. I experience deeply in my heart all that Jesus suffered, although no exterior sign betrays these sufferings of mine. Only my confessor knows about them.

204 A short conversation with Mother Directress [Margaret]. When I asked her about some particulars concerning progress in the spiritual life, this holy Mother answered everything with great clarity. She said to me, "If you continue cooperating with God's grace in this way, Sister, you will be only one step away from close union with God. You understand what I mean by this. This means that your characteristic trait should be faithfulness to the grace of the Lord. God does not lead all souls along such a path."

205 +The Resurrection. Today, during the [Mass of the] Resurrection, I saw the Lord Jesus in the midst of a great light. He approached me and said, **Peace be to you, My children**, and He lifted up His hand and gave His blessing. The wounds in His hands, feet and side were indelible and shining. When He looked at me with such kindness and love, my whole soul drowned itself in Him. And He said to me, **You have taken a great part in My Passion; therefore I now give you a great share in My joy and glory**. The whole time of the Resurrection [Mass] seemed like only a minute to me. A wondrous recollection filled my soul and lasted throughout the whole festal season. The kindness of Jesus is so great that

I cannot express it.

206 **(99)** The next day, after Communion, I heard the voice saying, **My daughter, look into the abyss of My mercy and give praise and glory to this mercy of Mine. Do it in this way: Gather all sinners from the entire world and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. I want to give Myself to souls; I yearn for souls, My daughter. On the day of My feast, the Feast of Mercy, you will go through the whole world and bring fainting souls to the spring of My mercy. I shall heal and strengthen them.**

207 I prayed today for a soul in agony, who was dying without the Holy Sacraments, although she desired them. But it was already too late. It was a relative of mine, my uncle's wife. She was a soul pleasing to God. There was no distance between us at that moment.

208 O you small, everyday sacrifices, you are to me like wild flowers which I strew over the feet of my beloved Jesus. I sometimes compare these trifles to the heroic virtues, and that is because their enduring nature demands heroism.

209 In my sufferings, I do not seek help from creatures, but God is everything to me. And yet, it often seems that even the Lord does not hear me. I arm myself with patience and silence, like a dove that does not complain and feels no bitterness when its children are being taken away from it. I want to soar into the very heat of the sun, and I do not want to stop in its vapors. I will not grow weary, because it is on You that I am leaning — O You, my Strength!

210 I fervently beg the Lord to strengthen my faith, so that in my drab, everyday life I will not be guided by human dispositions, but by those of the spirit. Oh, how everything drags man towards the earth! But lively faith maintains the soul in the higher regions and assigns self-love its proper place; that is to say, the lowest one.

211 **(100)** +Once again, a terrible darkness envelops my soul. It seems to me that I am falling prey to illusions. When I went to confession to obtain some light and peace, I did not find these at all. The confessor⁶⁶ left me with even more doubts than I had before. He said to me, "I cannot discern

what power is at work in you, Sister, perhaps it is God and perhaps it is the evil spirit.” When I left the confessional, I started to think about his words. The longer I did so, the deeper my soul sank into darkness. “Jesus, what am I to do?” When Jesus approached me with kindness, I was frightened. “Are you really Jesus?” On the one hand, I am drawn by love and, on the other, by fear. What torture! I cannot describe it!

212 When I went to confession again, I got the answer, “I do not understand you, Sister. It would be better if you did not come to me for confession.” O my God!...I have to do such violence to myself before I say anything about my spiritual life, and here I am getting this answer: “Sister, I do not understand you!”

213 When I left the confessional, a multitude of torments oppressed me. I went before the Blessed Sacrament and said, “Jesus, save me; You see how weak I am!” Then I heard these words, **I will give you help during the retreat before the vows.** Encouraged by these words, I began to go forward without asking anyone’s advice. But I distrusted myself so much that I made up my mind to put an end to the doubts once and for all. I therefore looked forward with special eagerness to the retreat before perpetual vows. But even for many days before the retreat, I kept on asking God to give light to the priest who would hear my confession, so that he could say, once and for all, either yes or no. And I thought to myself, “I’ll be set at peace once and for all.” But I continued to worry whether anyone would be willing to hear me out concerning all these matters. And yet again, I decided not to think about all this and to put my trust in the Lord. The words that continued to ring in my ears were: “during the retreat.”

214 **(101)** Everything is now ready. Tomorrow morning we are leaving for Cracow, for the retreat. Today I entered the chapel to thank the Lord for the countless graces He has bestowed on me during these five months. My heart was deeply touched at the thought of so many graces and so much care on the part of the superiors.

215 **My daughter, be at peace; I am taking all these matters upon Myself. I will arrange all things with your superiors and with the confessor. Speak to Father Andrasz with the same simplicity and confidence with which you speak to Me.**

216 We have come to Cracow today [April 18, 1933]. What a joy it is to find myself again where I took my first steps in the spiritual life! Dear Mother Directress [Mary Joseph] is ever the same, cheerful and full of love of neighbor. I entered the chapel for a moment and joy filled my soul. In a flash I recalled the whole ocean of graces that had been given me as a novice here.

217 And today we gathered together to go for an hour's visit to the novitiate. The Mother Directress, Mary Joseph, gave us a short talk and outlined the program of the retreat. As she spoke these few words to us, I saw before my eyes all the good things this dear Mother had done for us. I felt in my soul such profound gratitude toward her. My heart grieved at the thought that this was the last time I would be in the novitiate. Now I must battle together with Jesus, work with Jesus, suffer with Jesus; in a word, live and die with Jesus. Mother Directress will no longer be at my heels to teach me here, warn me there, or to admonish, encourage or reproach me. I am so afraid of being on my own. Jesus, do something about this. I will always have a superior, that's true; but now a person is left more on her own.

(102) Cracow, April 21, 1933

+ For the Greater Glory of God.

The Eight-day Retreat before Perpetual Vows.

218 I am beginning the retreat today. Jesus, my Master, guide me. Govern me according to Your will, purify my love that it may be worthy of You, do with me as Your most merciful Heart desires. Jesus, there will be just the two of us during these days until the moment of our union. Keep me, Jesus, in a recollected spirit!

219 In the evening, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, let nothing frighten or disconcert you. Remain deeply at peace. Everything is in My hands. I will give you to understand everything through Father Andrasz. Be like a child towards him.**

A Moment Before the Blessed Sacrament.

220 O my eternal Lord and Creator, how am I going to thank You for this

great favor; namely, that You have deigned to choose miserable me to be Your betrothed and that You are to unite me to Yourself in an eternal bond? O dearest Treasure of my heart, I offer You all the adoration and thanksgiving of the Saints and of all the choirs of Angels, and I unite myself in a special way with Your Mother. O Mary, my Mother, I humbly beg of You, cover my soul with Your virginal cloak at this very important moment of my life, so that thus I may become dearer to Your Son and may worthily praise Your Son's mercy before the whole world and throughout all eternity.

221 **(103)** I could not understand the meditation today. My spirit was so extraordinarily immersed in God. I could not force myself to think about what the priest was saying during the retreat [conferences]. I am often unable to think according to the points; my spirit is with the Lord, and that is my meditation.

222 A few words from my conference with Mother Directress, Mary Joseph. She clarified many things for me, and she set me at peace as regards my spiritual life, reassuring me that I was on the right path. I thanked the Lord Jesus for this great favor, for she is the first of the superiors who did not cause me any doubts in this regard. Oh, how infinitely good God is!

223 O living Host, my one and only strength, fountain of love and mercy, embrace the whole world, fortify faint souls. Oh, blessed be the instant and the moment when Jesus left us His most merciful Heart!

224 To suffer without complaining, to bring comfort to others and to drown my own sufferings in the most Sacred Heart of Jesus!

I will spend all my free moments at the feet of [Our Lord in] the Blessed Sacrament. At the feet of Jesus, I will seek light, comfort and strength. I will show my gratitude unceasingly to God for His great mercy towards me, never forgetting the favors He has bestowed on me, especially the grace of a vocation.

I will hide myself among the sisters like a little violet among lilies. I want to blossom for my Lord and Maker, to forget about myself, to empty myself totally for the sake of immortal souls — this is my delight.

(104) + A few of my thoughts.

225 As regards Holy Confession, I shall choose what costs and humiliates me most. Sometimes a trifle costs more than something greater. I will call to mind the Passion of Jesus at each confession, to arouse my heart to contrition. Insofar as possible, with the grace of God, I will always practice perfect contrition. I will devote more time to this contrition. Before I approach the confessional, I shall first enter the open and most merciful Heart of the Savior. When I leave the confessional, I shall rouse in my soul great gratitude to the Holy Trinity for this wonderful and inconceivable miracle of mercy that is wrought in my soul. And the more miserable my soul is, the more I feel the ocean of God's mercy engulfing me and giving me strength and great power.

226 The rules that I most often fail to obey: sometimes I break silence; disobedience to the signal of the bell; sometimes I meddle in other people's affairs. I will do my very best to improve.

I will avoid sisters who grumble, and if they cannot be avoided, I will at least keep silent before them, thus letting them know how sorry I am to hear such things.

I must take no heed of the opinion of others, but obey the evidence of my own conscience and take God to be the witness of all my actions. I must do everything and act in all matters now as I would like to do and act at the hour of my death. For this reason, in every action I must be mindful of God.

Avoid presumed permissions.⁶⁷ I must report [even] small things to my superiors, and do so in as much detail as is possible. I must be faithful in my spiritual exercises; I must not easily ask to be dispensed from them. I must keep silence outside the time of recreation, and avoid jokes and witty words that make others laugh and break silence. I must have great appreciation **(105)** for even the most minute rules. I must not let myself become absorbed in the whirl of work, [but] take a break to look up to heaven. Speak little with people, but a good deal with God. Avoid familiarity. I must pay little attention as to who is for me and who is against me. I must not tell others about those things I have had to put up with. I must avoid speaking out loud to others during work. I must maintain peace and equanimity during times of suffering. In difficult moments, I must take refuge in the wounds of Jesus; I must seek

consolation, comfort, light and affirmation in the wounds of Jesus.

227 +In the midst of trials I will try to see the loving hand of God. Nothing is as constant as suffering — it always faithfully keeps the soul company. O Jesus, I will let no one surpass me in loving You!

+ O Jesus, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament,

228 You see that in pronouncing my perpetual vows I am leaving the novitiate⁶⁸ today. Jesus, You know how weak and little I am, and so from today on, I am entering Your novitiate in a very special way. I continue to be a novice, but Your novice, Jesus, and You will be my Master to the last day. Daily I will attend lectures at Your feet. I will not do the least thing by myself, without consulting You first as my Master. Jesus, how happy I am that You Yourself have drawn me and taken me into Your novitiate; that is to say, into the tabernacle. In making my perpetual vows, I have by no means become a perfect nun. No, no! I am still a weak little novice of Jesus, and I must strive to acquire perfection as I did in the first days of the novitiate, and I will make every effort to keep the same disposition of soul which I had on that first day the convent gate opened to admit me.

With the trust and simplicity of a small child, I give myself to You today, O Lord Jesus, my Master. I leave You complete freedom in directing my soul. Guide me along the paths You wish. I won't question them. I will follow You trustingly. Your merciful Heart can do all things!

The little novice of Jesus — Sister Faustina.

229 (106) +At the beginning of the retreat, Jesus told me, **During this retreat, I Myself will direct your soul. I want to confirm you in peace and love.** And so, the first few days passed by. On the fourth day, doubts began to trouble me: Is not this tranquillity of mine false? Then I heard these words, **My daughter, imagine that you are the sovereign of all the world and have the power to dispose of all things according to your good pleasure. You have the power to do all the good you want, and suddenly a little child knocks on your door, all trembling and in tears and, trusting in your kindness, asks for a piece of bread lest he die of starvation. What would you do for this child? Answer Me, my**

daughter. And I said, “Jesus, I would give the child all it asked and a thousand times more.” And the Lord said to me, **That is how I am treating your soul. In this retreat I am giving you, not only peace, but also such a disposition of soul that even if you wanted to experience uneasiness you could not do so. My love has taken possession of your soul, and I want you to be confirmed in it. Bring your ear close to My Heart, forget everything else, and meditate upon My wondrous mercy. My love will give you the strength and courage you need in these matters.**

230 Jesus, living Host, You are my Mother, You are my all! It is with simplicity and love, with faith and trust that I will always come to You, O Jesus! I will share everything with You, as a child with its loving mother, my joys and sorrows — in a word, everything.

231 No one can comprehend what my heart feels when I meditate on the fact that God unites me with Himself through the vows. God makes known to me, even now, the immensity of the love He already had for me before time began; and as for me, I have just begun to love Him, in time. His love was [ever] great, pure and disinterested, and my love for Him comes from the fact that I am beginning to know Him. The more I come to know Him, the more **(107)** ardently, the more fiercely I love Him, and the more perfect my acts become. Meanwhile, each time I call to mind that in a few days I am to become one with the Lord through perpetual vows, a joy beyond all description floods my soul. From the very first time that I came to know the Lord, the gaze of my soul became drowned in Him for all eternity. Each time the Lord draws close to me and my knowledge of Him grows deeper, a more perfect love grows within my soul.

232 +Before confession, I heard these words in my soul, **My daughter, tell him everything and reveal your soul to him as you do before Me. Do not fear anything. It is to keep you in peace that I place this priest between your soul and Myself. The words he will speak to you are My words. Reveal to him your soul’s greatest secrets. I will give him light to know your soul.**

233 When I approached the confessional, I felt so much at ease in my soul about speaking of everything that, later on, I myself was astounded. His answers brought a great peace into my soul. His words were, are, and

always will be pillars of fire which enlightened and will go on enlightening my soul in its pursuit of the greatest sanctity.

The directions I received from Father Andrasz I have noted on another page in this notebook [cf. *Diary* no. 55].

234 When I finished this confession, my spirit was immersed in God, and I prayed for three hours, but it seemed to me like only a few minutes. Since then, I have placed no obstacles in the way of grace working in my soul. Jesus knew why I had been afraid to commune intimately with Him and was not at all offended. From the moment the priest assured me that what I had experienced was not an illusion, but the grace of God, I have tried to be faithful to God in everything. I can see now that there are few such priests who understand the full depth of God's work in the soul. Since then, my wings have been set free for flight, and I yearn to soar into the very fire of the sun. My flight will not come to an end until I rest in Him forever. When we fly very high, all the vapors, mists, and (108) clouds are beneath our feet, and our whole carnal being is necessarily subject to the spirit.

235 O Jesus, I long for the salvation of immortal souls. It is in sacrifice that my heart will find free expression, in sacrifice which no one will suspect. I will burn and be consumed unseen in the holy flames of the love of God. The presence of God will help my sacrifice to be perfect and pure.

236 Oh, how misleading are appearances, and how unjust the judgments. Oh, how often virtue suffers only because it remains silent. To be sincere with those who are incessantly stinging us demands much self-denial. One bleeds, but there are no visible wounds. O Jesus, it is only on the last day that many of these things will be made known. What joy — none of our efforts will be lost!

237 Holy Hour. During this hour of adoration, I saw the abyss of my misery; whatever there is of good in me is Yours, O Lord. But because I am so small and wretched, I have a right to count on Your boundless mercy.

238 Evening. O Jesus, tomorrow morning I am to make my perpetual vows. I had asked heaven and earth and had called upon all beings to thank God for this immense and inconceivable favor of His when suddenly I heard

these words, **My daughter, your heart is My heaven.** Just a few moments of prayer and I have to run, as they drive us out of everywhere; because every place — the chapel, the refectory, the recreation room and the kitchen — is being made ready for tomorrow, and we are to go to **(109)** bed. However, sleep is out of the question. Joy has driven sleep away. I thought: “What is it going to be like in heaven, if already here in exile God so fills my soul.”

239 Prayer during the Mass on the day of the perpetual vows. Today I place my heart on the paten where Your Heart has been placed, O Jesus, and today I offer myself together with You to God, Your Father and mine, as a sacrifice of love and praise. Father of Mercy, look upon the sacrifice of my heart, but through the wound in the Heart of Jesus.

May 1, 1933. First Day.

Union with Jesus on the day of perpetual vows. Jesus, from now on Your Heart is mine, and mine is Yours alone. The very thought of Your Name, Jesus, is the delight of my heart. I truly would not be able to live without You, even for a moment, Jesus. Today my soul has lost itself in You, my only treasure. My love knows no obstacles in giving proof of itself to its Beloved.

The words of Jesus during my perpetual vows: **My spouse, our hearts are joined forever. Remember to Whom you have vowed...** everything cannot be put into words.

My petition while we were lying prostrate under the pall.⁶⁹ I begged the Lord to grant me the grace of never consciously and deliberately offending Him by even the smallest sin or imperfection.

Jesus, I trust in You! Jesus, I love You with all my heart! When times are most difficult, You are my Mother.

For love of You, O Jesus, I die completely to myself today and begin to live for the greater glory of Your Holy Name.

(110) +Love, it is for love of You, O Most Holy Trinity, that I offer myself to You as an oblation of praise, as a holocaust of total self-immolation. And through this self-immolation, I desire the exaltation of

Your Name, O Lord. I cast myself as a little rosebud at Your feet, O Lord, and may the fragrance of this flower be known to You alone.

240 Three requests on the day of my perpetual vows. Jesus, I know that today You will refuse me nothing.

First request: Jesus, my most beloved Spouse, I beg You for the triumph of the Church, particularly in Russia and in Spain; for blessings on the Holy Father, Pius XI, and on all the clergy; for the grace of conversion for impenitent sinners. And I ask You for a special blessing and for light, O Jesus, for the priests before whom I will make my confessions throughout my lifetime.

Second request: I beg Your blessings on our Congregation, and may it be filled with great zeal. Bless, O Jesus, our Mother General and our Mother Directress, all the novices and all the superiors. Bless my dearest parents. Bestow Your grace, O Jesus, on our wards; strengthen them so powerfully by Your grace so that those who leave our houses will no longer offend You by any sin. Jesus, I beg You for my homeland; protect it against the assaults of its enemies.

Third request: Jesus, I plead with You for the souls that are most in need of prayer. I plead for the dying; be merciful to them. I also beg You, Jesus, to free all souls from purgatory.

Jesus, I commend to You these particular persons: My confessors, persons recommended to my prayers, a certain person..., Father Andrasz, Father Czaputa, and the priest I met in Vilnius [Father Sopocko], who is to be my confessor, a certain soul... **(111)** a certain priest, a certain religious⁷⁰ to whom You know how much I owe, Jesus, and all the people who have been recommended to my prayer. Jesus, on this day You can do everything for those for whom I am pleading. For myself I ask, Lord, transform me completely into Yourself, maintain in me a holy zeal for Your glory, give me the grace and spiritual strength to do Your holy will in all things.

Thank You, O my dearest Bridegroom, for the dignity You have conferred on me, and in particular for the royal coat-of-arms which will adorn me from this day on and which even the Angels do not possess;

namely, the cross, the sword, and the crown of thorns. But above all, O my Jesus, I thank You for Your Heart — it is all I need.

Mother of God, Most Holy Mary, my Mother, You are my Mother in a special way now because Your beloved Son is my Bridegroom, and thus we are both Your children. For Your Son's sake, You have to love me. O Mary, my dearest Mother, guide my spiritual life in such a way that it will please Your Son.

+Holy and Omnipotent God, at this moment of immense grace by which You are uniting me with Yourself forever, I, mere nothingness, with the utmost gratitude, cast myself at Your feet like a tiny, unknown flower and, each day, the fragrance of that flower of love will ascend to Your throne.

In times of struggle and suffering, of darkness and storm, of yearning and sorrow, in times of difficult trials, in times when nobody will understand me, when I will even be condemned and scorned by everyone, I will remember the day of my perpetual vows, the day of God's incomprehensible grace.

(112) J.M.J.

Special Resolutions of the Retreat, May 1, 1933

241 Love of neighbor. First: Helpfulness towards the sisters. Second: Do not speak about those who are absent, and defend the good name of my neighbor. Third: Rejoice in the success of others.

242 +O God, how much I desire to be a small child.²¹ You are my Father, and You know how little and weak I am. So I beg You, keep me close by Your side all my life and especially at the hour of my death. Jesus, I know that Your goodness surpasses the goodness of a most tender mother.

243 I will thank the Lord Jesus for every humiliation and will pray specially for the person who has given me the chance to be humiliated. I will immolate myself for the benefit of souls. I will not count the cost of any sacrifice, I will cast myself beneath the feet of the sisters, like a carpet on which they can not only tread, but also wipe their feet. My place is under

the feet of the sisters. I will make every effort to obtain that place unnoticed by others. It is enough that God sees this.

244 Now a gray, ordinary day has begun, The solemn hours of the perpetual vows have passed, but God's great grace has remained in my soul. I feel I am all God's; I feel I am His child, I feel I am wholly God's property. I experience this in a way that can be physically sensed. I am completely at peace about everything, because I know it is the Spouse's business to look after me. I have forgotten about myself completely. My trust placed in His Most Merciful Heart has no limit. I am continuously united with Him. It seems to me as though Jesus could not be happy without me, nor could I, without Him. Although I understand that, being God, He is happy in Himself and has absolutely no need of any creature, still, His goodness compels Him to give Himself to the creature, and with a generosity which is beyond understanding.

245 **(113)** My Jesus, I will now strive to give honor and glory to Your Name, doing battle till the day on which You Yourself will say, enough! Every soul You have entrusted to me, Jesus, I will try to aid with prayer and sacrifice, so that Your grace can work in them. O great lover of souls, my Jesus, I thank You for this immense confidence with which You have deigned to place souls in our care. O, you days of work and of monotony, you are not monotonous to me at all, for each moment brings me new graces and opportunity to do good.

+ [April] 25, 1933

Monthly Permissions⁷²

246 To enter the chapel when I pass near it.

To pray in my moments of leisure.

To accept, give or lend small things.

To have a mid-morning and an afternoon snack.

Sometimes I will not be able to take part in recreation.

Sometimes I will not be able to take part in community exercises.

Sometimes I will not be able to take part in evening and morning prayers.

Sometimes to remain at work a little longer after nine or to make my spiritual exercises after nine.

To write down something or take notes when I have a free moment.

To telephone.
To go out of the house.
To visit a church when I am in town.
To enter other sisters' cells in case of need.
To take a drink of water occasionally outside the prescribed times.

Small Mortifications

To recite the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy with outstretched arms.
On Saturday, to say five decades of the Rosary with outstretched arms.
To sometimes recite a prayer [while] lying prostrate.
On Thursdays, a Holy Hour.
On Fridays, some greater mortification for dying sinners.

247 **(114)** Jesus, Friend of a lonely heart, You are my haven, You are my peace. You are my salvation, You are my serenity in moments of struggle and amidst an ocean of doubts. You are the bright ray that lights up the path of my life. You are everything to a lonely soul. You understand the soul even though it remains silent. You know our weaknesses, and like a good physician, You comfort and heal, sparing us sufferings — expert that You are.

248 The words of the Bishop [Rospond²³], spoken at the ceremony of the taking of perpetual vows: “Accept this candle as a sign of heavenly light and of burning love.”

While giving the ring: “I betroth you to Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father Most High; may He keep you unblemished. Take this ring as a sign of the eternal covenant you are making with Christ, the Spouse of Virgins. May it be for you the ring of faith and the sign of the Holy Spirit, that you may be called the bride of Christ and, if you serve Him faithfully, be crowned [as such] for all eternity.”

249 +Jesus, I trust in You; I trust in the ocean of your mercy. You are a Mother to me.

250 +This year, 1933, is for me an especially solemn year, because in this Jubilee Year of the Lord's Passion, I have taken my perpetual vows. I have joined my sacrifice in a special way to the sacrifice of the crucified Jesus, in order to thus become more pleasing to God. I do all things with

Jesus, through Jesus, in Jesus.

251 After perpetual vows, I stayed in Cracow throughout the month of May, because it was undecided whether I was to go to Rabka or to Vilnius. Once Mother General [Michael] asked me, “Why are you sitting here so quietly and not getting ready to go somewhere, Sister?” I answered, “I want to do God’s pure will; wherever you bid me to go, dear Mother, I will know God’s pure will for me will be there, without any admixture on my part.”

(115) Mother General replied to this, “Very well!” The next day she summoned me and said, “You wanted to have God’s pure will, Sister; very well, then; you are going to Vilnius.” I thanked her and awaited the day when I would be told to go. However, my soul was filled with a certain joy and fear, at one and the same time. I felt that God was preparing great graces for me there, but also great sufferings. Yet, I stayed on in Cracow until the 27th of May. As I had no regular duties, I only went to help in the garden. And, as it happened that I worked all alone for the whole month, I was able to make a Jesuit retreat.⁷⁴ Although I went to community recreation, I still managed to make the Jesuit retreat. I received much light from God during this time.

252 +It was four days after my perpetual vows. I was trying to make a Holy Hour. It was the first Thursday of the month. As soon as I entered the chapel, God’s presence enveloped me. I was distinctly aware that the Lord was near me. After a moment, I saw the Lord, all covered with wounds; and He said to me, **Look at whom you have espoused.** I understood the meaning of these words and answered the Lord, “Jesus, I love You more when I see You wounded and crushed with suffering like this than if I saw You in majesty.” Jesus asked, **Why?** I replied, “Great majesty terrifies me, little nothing that I am, and Your wounds draw me to Your Heart and tell me of Your great love for me.” After this conversation there was silence. I fixed my gaze upon His sacred wounds and felt happy to suffer with Him. I suffered, and yet I did not suffer, because I felt happy to know the depth of His love, and the hour passed like a minute.

253 +I must never judge anyone, but look at others with leniency and at myself with severity. I must refer everything to God and, in my own eyes,

recognize myself for what I am: utter misery and nothingness. In suffering, I must be patient and quiet, knowing that everything passes in time.

254 **(116)** +The moments I lived through when I was taking my perpetual vows are better left unsaid.

I am in Him, and He in me. As the Bishop [Rospond] was putting the ring on my finger, God pervaded my whole being, and since I cannot express that moment, I will be silent about it. My relationship with God, since perpetual vows, has been more intimate than it had ever been before. I sense that I love God and that He loves me. Having once tasted God, my soul could not live without Him. One hour spent at the foot of the altar in the greatest dryness of spirit is dearer to me than a hundred years of worldly pleasures. I prefer to be a lowly drudge in the convent than a queen in the world.

255 +I will hide from people's eyes whatever good I am able to do so that God Himself may be my reward. I will be like a tiny violet hidden in the grass, which does not hurt the foot that treads on it, but diffuses its fragrance and, forgetting itself completely, tries to please the person who has crushed it underfoot. This is very difficult for human nature, but God's grace comes to one's aid.

256 +Thank You, Jesus, for the great favor of making known to me the whole abyss of my misery. I know that I am an abyss of nothingness and that, if Your holy grace did not hold me up, I would return to nothingness in a moment. And so, with every beat of my heart, I thank You, my God, for Your great mercy towards me.

257 Tomorrow I am to leave for Vilnius. Today, I went to confession to Father Andrasz, this priest who is so filled with the spirit of God, who untied my wings so that I could soar to the highest summits. He reassured me in everything and told me to believe in Divine Providence. "Have confidence and walk ahead with courage." An extraordinary, divine power came over me after that confession. **(117)** Father stressed that I must be faithful to God's grace and said, "No harm will come to you if, in the future, you continue to keep this same simplicity and obedience. Have confidence in God; you are on the right path and in good hands, in

God's hands."

258 +That evening, I remained in the chapel a little longer. I talked to the Lord about a certain soul. Encouraged by His goodness, I said, "Jesus, you gave me this Father who understands my inspirations, and now You are taking him away from me again. What am I going to do in this Vilnius? I don't know anyone there, and even the dialect of the people there is foreign to me." And the Lord said to me, **Do not fear; I will not leave you to yourself.** My soul drowned itself in a prayer of thanksgiving for all the graces that the Lord had granted me through the mediation of Father Andrasz.

Suddenly, I remembered the vision in which I had seen that priest between the confessional and the altar, trusting that I would meet him some day. And the words I had heard came back vividly: **He will help you to fulfill My will here on earth.**

259 Today, 27 [May 1933], I am leaving for Vilnius. When I came out of the house, I looked at the garden and the house, and when I cast a glance at the novitiate, tears suddenly ran down my cheeks. I remembered all the blessings and graces bestowed on me by the Lord. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, I saw the Lord by the flower bed, and He said to me, **Do not weep; I am with you always.** God's presence, which enveloped me as Jesus was speaking, accompanied me throughout the journey.

260 I had permission to visit Czestochowa while on my journey. I saw the Mother of God [image] for the first time, when I went to attend the unveiling of the image at five in the morning. I prayed without interruption until eleven, and it seemed to me that I had just come. The Superior of the house there [Mother Serafin²⁵] sent a sister for me, to tell me to come to breakfast and said she was worried **(118)** that I would miss my train. The Mother of God told me many things. I entrusted my perpetual vows to Her. I felt that I was her child and that She was my Mother. She did not refuse any of my requests.

261 +I am already in Vilnius today. A few scattered tiny huts make up the convent. It seems a bit strange to me after the large buildings of Jozefow. There are only eighteen sisters here. The house is small, but the community life is more intimate. All the sisters received me very warmly,

which was for me a great encouragement to endure the hardships that lay ahead. Sister Justine had even scrubbed the floor in anticipation of my arrival.

262 +When I went to Benediction, Jesus enlightened me on how I was to conduct myself in respect to certain persons. I clung with all my might to the most sweet Heart of Jesus, knowing how much I would be exposed to external distractions because of the work I would be doing here in the garden, where I necessarily would be in close contact with lay persons.

263 +The week for confession came and, to my great joy, I saw the priest I had known before coming to Vilnius. [That is to say,] I had known him by seeing him in a vision. At that moment, I heard these words in my soul: **This is My faithful servant; he will help you to fulfill My will here on earth.** Yet, I did not open myself to him as the Lord wished. And for some time I struggled against grace. During each confession, God's grace penetrated me in a very special way, yet I did not reveal my soul before him, and I had the intention of not going to confession to that priest. After this decision, a terrible anxiety entered my soul. God reproached me severely. When I did lay bare my soul completely to this priest, Jesus poured an ocean of graces into it. Now I understand what it means to be faithful to a particular grace. That one grace draws down a whole series of others.

264 (119) +O my Jesus, keep me near to You! See how weak I am! I cannot go a step forward by myself; so You, Jesus, must stand by me constantly like a mother by a helpless child — and even more so.

265 Days of work, of struggle, and of suffering have begun. Everything continued according to the convent routine. One is always a novice, having to learn many things and to get to know about many things, because although the rule is the same, each house has its own customs; and thus, each change is a little novitiate.

August 5, 1933. The Feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

266 Today I received a great and incomprehensible grace, a purely interior one, for which I will be grateful to God throughout this life and in eternity...

267 Jesus told me that I please Him best by meditating on His sorrowful Passion, and by such meditation much light falls upon my soul. He who wants to learn true humility should reflect upon the Passion of Jesus. When I meditate upon the Passion of Jesus, I get a clear understanding of many things I could not comprehend before. I want to resemble You, O Jesus, — You crucified, tortured, and humiliated. Jesus, imprint upon my heart and soul Your own humility. I love You, Jesus, to the point of madness, You who were crushed with suffering as described by the prophet [cf. Isaiah 53:2-9], as if he could not see the human form in You because of Your great suffering. It is in this condition, Jesus, that I love You to the point of madness. O eternal and infinite God, what has love done to You?...

268 October 11, 1933. — Thursday. — I tried to make a Holy Hour, but began it with great difficulty. A certain yearning started to tear at my heart. My mind was dimmed so that I could not understand the simplest forms of prayer. And so passed by an hour of prayer, or rather of struggle. I resolved to pray for a second hour, but my inner sufferings increased — great **(120)** dryness and discouragement. I resolved to pray for a third hour. In the third hour, which I resolved to spend kneeling without any support, my body started to clamor for rest. But I in no way relented. I stretched out my arms and, though I spoke no words, I persisted by sheer will. After a while, I took the ring off my finger and asked Jesus to look at the ring, that sign of our eternal union, and I offered Jesus the feelings I had on the day of perpetual vows. After a while, I feel my heart inundated with a wave of love. A sudden recollection of spirit, the senses quiet down, and God's presence pervades my soul. I know only this: that it is Jesus and I. I saw Him just as He had appeared to me in that instant after my perpetual vows, when I was likewise making a Holy Hour. Jesus was suddenly standing before me, stripped of His clothes, His body completely covered with wounds, His eyes flooded with tears and blood, His face disfigured and covered with spittle. The Lord then said to me, **The bride must resemble her Betrothed.** I understood these words to their very depth. There is no room for doubt here. My likeness to Jesus must be through suffering and humility. **See what love of human souls has done to Me. My daughter, in your heart I find everything that so great a number of souls**

refuses Me. Your heart is My repose. I often wait with great graces until towards the end of prayer.

269 Once, when I had finished a novena to the Holy Spirit for the intention of my confessor [Father Sopocko], the Lord answered, **I made him known to you even before your superiors had sent you here. As you will act towards your confessor, so I will act toward you. If you conceal something from him, even though it be the least of My graces, I too will hide Myself from you, and you will remain alone.** And so I followed God's wish, and a deep peace filled my soul. Now I understand how the Lord defends confessors and how He protects them.

(121) Advice of the Rev. Dr. Sopocko.

270 Without humility, we cannot be pleasing to God. Practice the third degree of humility;⁷⁶ that is, not only must one refrain from explaining and defending oneself when reproached with something, but one should rejoice at the humiliation.

If the things you are telling me really come from God, prepare your soul for great suffering. You will encounter disapproval and persecution. They will look upon you as a hysteric and an eccentric, but the Lord will lavish His graces upon you. True works of God always meet opposition and are marked by suffering. If God wants to accomplish something, sooner or later He will do so in spite of the difficulties. Your part, in the meantime, is to arm yourself with great patience.

271 When the Rev. Dr. Sopocko went to the Holy Land, Father Dabrowski, S.J., was the community's confessor. During one confession he asked me if I was aware of the high degree of [spiritual] life that was present in my soul. I answered that I was aware of it and knew what was going on within me. To this the Father replied, "You must not destroy what is going on in your soul, Sister, nor must you change anything on your own. It is not in every soul that the beautiful gift of a higher interior life is manifest as it is in your case, Sister, for it is manifest in an immense degree. Be careful not to waste these great graces of God; a great..." [Here the thought breaks off.]

272 But previously, this priest had put me through many trials. When I told

him that the Lord wanted these things of me [that is, the painting of the image, the establishing of a feast of The Divine Mercy, and the founding of a new community], he laughed at me and told me to come to confession at eight in the evening. When I came at eight, a brother was already locking the church. When I told him that Father had ordered me to come at that time **(122)** and asked him to let Father know I was there, the good brother went to let him know. Father told him to tell me that priests do not hear confessions at that time of day. I returned home empty-handed and did not go to confession to him again, but I made a whole hour's adoration and took on certain mortifications for him, that he might obtain light from God in order to know souls. But when Father Sopocko left, and he substituted for him, I was forced to go to confession to him. Yet, while previously he had been unwilling to acknowledge these inner inspirations, he now put me under obligation to be faithful to them. God lets such things happen sometimes, but may He be glorified in everything. Still, it requires much grace not to falter.

Annual Retreat. January 10, 1934.

273 My Jesus, again the moment approaches when I will be alone with You. Jesus, I ask You with all my heart, let me know what there is in me that displeases You and also let me know what I should do to become more pleasing to You. Do not refuse me this favor and be with me. I know that without You, Lord, all my efforts will not amount to much. Oh, how I rejoice at Your greatness, O Lord! The more I come to know You, the more ardently I yearn for You and sigh after You!

274 Jesus gave me the grace of knowing myself. In this divine light I see my principal fault; it is pride which takes the form of my closing up within myself and of a lack of simplicity in my relations with Mother Superior [Irene].

The second light concerns speaking. I sometimes talk too much. A thing could be settled in one or two words, and as for me, I take too much time about it. But Jesus wants me to use that time to say some short indulgenced prayers for the souls in purgatory. And the Lord says that every word will be weighed on the day of judgment.

(123) The third light concerns our rules. I have not sufficiently avoided

the occasions that lead to breaking the rules, especially that of silence. I will act as if the rule were written just for me; it should not affect me at all how anyone else might act, as long as I myself act as God wishes.

Resolution. Whatever Jesus demands of me regarding external things, I will immediately go and tell my superiors. I shall strive for childlike openness and frankness in my relations with the superior.

275 Jesus loves hidden souls. A hidden flower is the most fragrant. I must strive to make the interior of my soul a resting place for the Heart of Jesus. In difficult and painful moments, O my Creator, I sing You a hymn of trust, for bottomless is the abyss of my trust in You and in Your mercy!

276 From the moment I came to love suffering, it ceased to be a suffering for me. Suffering is the daily food of my soul.

277 I will not speak with a certain person, because I know that Jesus does not like it and that she does not profit by it.

278 At the feet of the Lord. Hidden Jesus, Eternal Love, our Source of Life, Divine Madman, in that You forget yourself and see only us. Before creating heaven and earth, You carried us in the depths of Your Heart. O Love, O depth of Your Abasement, O mystery of happiness, why do so few people know You? Why is Your love not returned? O Divine Love, why do You hide Your beauty? O Infinite One beyond all understanding, the more I know You the less I comprehend You; but because I cannot comprehend You, I better comprehend Your greatness. I do not envy the Seraphim their fire, for I have a greater gift deposited in my heart. **(124)** They admire You in rapture, but Your Blood mingles with mine. Love is heaven given us already here on earth. Oh, why do You hide in faith? Love tears away the veil. There is no veil before the eye of my soul, for You Yourself have drawn me into the bosom of secret love forever. Praise and glory be to You, O Indivisible Trinity, One God, unto ages of ages!

279 God made known to me what true love consists in and gave light to me about how, in practice, to give proof of it to Him. True love of God consists in carrying out God's will. To show God our love in what we do,

all our actions, even the least, must spring from our love of God. And the Lord said to me, **My child, you please Me most by suffering. In your physical as well as your mental sufferings, My daughter, do not seek sympathy from creatures. I want the fragrance of your suffering to be pure and unadulterated. I want you to detach yourself, not only from creatures, but also from yourself. My daughter, I want to delight in the love of your heart, a pure love, virginal, unblemished, untarnished. The more you will come to love suffering, My daughter, the purer your love for Me will be.**

280 Jesus commanded me to celebrate the Feast of God's Mercy on the first Sunday after Easter. [This I did] through interior recollection and exterior mortification, wearing the belt for three hours and praying continuously for sinners and for mercy on the whole world. And Jesus said to me, **My eyes rest with pleasure upon this house today.**

281 I feel certain that my mission will not come to an end upon my death, but will begin. O doubting souls, I will draw aside for you the veils of heaven to convince you of God's goodness, so that you will no longer continue to wound with your distrust the sweetest Heart of Jesus. God is Love and Mercy.

282 (125) Once the Lord said to me, **My Heart was moved by great mercy towards you, My dearest child, when I saw you torn to shreds because of the great pain you suffered in repenting for your sins. I see your love, so pure and true that I give you first place among the virgins. You are the honor and glory of My Passion. I see every abasement of your soul, and nothing escapes my attention. I lift up the humble even to My very throne, because I want it so.**

God, One in the Holy Trinity.

283 I want to love You as no human soul has ever loved You before; and although I am utterly miserable and small, I have, nevertheless, cast the anchor of my trust deep down into the abyss of Your mercy, O my God and Creator! In spite of my great misery I fear nothing, but hope to sing You a hymn of glory for ever. Let no soul, even the most miserable, fall prey to doubt; for, as long as one is alive, each one can become a great saint, so great is the power of God's grace. It remains only for us not to

oppose God's action.

284 O Jesus, if only I could become like mist before Your eyes, to cover the earth so that You would not see its terrible crimes. Jesus, when I look at the world and its indifference towards You, again and again it brings tears to my eyes; but when I look at a cold soul of a religious, my heart bleeds.

285 1934. Once, when I returned to my cell, I was so tired that I had to rest a moment before I started to undress, and when I was already undressed, one of the sisters asked me to fetch her some hot water. Although I was tired, I dressed quickly and brought her the water she **(126)** wanted, even though it was quite a long walk from the cell to the kitchen, and the mud was ankle-deep. When I re-entered my cell, I saw the ciborium with the Blessed Sacrament, and I heard this voice, **Take this ciborium and bring it to the tabernacle.** I hesitated at first, but when I approached and touched it, I heard these words, **Approach each of the sisters with the same love with which you approach Me; and whatever you do for them, you do it for Me.** A moment later, I saw that I was alone.

286 +Once, after an adoration for our country, a pain pierced my soul, and I began to pray in this way: "Most merciful Jesus, I beseech You through the intercession of Your Saints, and especially the intercession of Your dearest Mother who nurtured You from childhood, bless my native land. I beg You, Jesus, look not on our sins, but on the tears of little children, on the hunger and cold they suffer. Jesus, for the sake of these innocent ones, grant me the grace that I am asking of You for my country." At that moment, I saw the Lord Jesus, His eyes filled with tears, and He said to me, **You see, My daughter, what great compassion I have for them. Know that it is they who uphold the world.**

287 +My Jesus, when I look at this life of souls, I see that many of them serve You with some mistrust. At certain times, especially when there is an opportunity to show their love for God, I see them running away from the battlefield. And once Jesus said to me, **Do you, my child, also want to act like that?** I answered the Lord, "Oh, no, my Jesus, I will not retreat from the battlefield, even if mortal sweat breaks out on my brow; I will not let the sword fall from my hand until I rest at the feet of the Holy Trinity!" Whatever I do, I do not rely on my own strength, but on God's

grace. With God's grace a soul can overcome the greatest difficulties.

288 **(127)** +Once when I was having a long talk with Jesus about our students, encouraged by His kindness, I asked Him, "Do You have among our students any who are a comfort to Your Heart?" The Lord answered [that] He has, **but their love is weak, and so I put them in your special care — pray for them.**

O great God, I admire Your goodness! You are the Lord of heavenly hosts, and yet You stoop so low to Your miserable creatures. Oh, how ardently I desire to love You with every beat of my heart! The whole extent of the earth is not enough for me, heaven is too small, and boundless space is nothing; You alone are enough for me, Eternal God! You alone can fill the depths of my soul.

289 My happiest moments are when I am alone with my Lord. During these moments I experience the greatness of God and my own misery.

Once, Jesus said to me, **Do not be surprised that you are sometimes unjustly accused. I Myself first drank this cup of undeserved suffering for love of you.**

290 Once, when I was deeply moved by the thought of eternity and its mysteries, my soul became fearful; and when I pondered about these a little longer, I started to be troubled by various doubts. Then Jesus said to me, **My child, do not be afraid of the house of your Father. Leave these vain inquiries to the wise of this world. I want to see you always as a little child. Ask your confessor about everything with simplicity, and I will answer you through his lips.**

291 On a certain occasion, I saw a person about to commit a mortal sin. I asked the Lord to send me the greatest torments so that that soul could be saved. **(128)** Then I suddenly felt the terrible pain of a crown of thorns on my head. It lasted for quite a long time, but that person remained in the Lord's grace. O my Jesus, how very easy it is to become holy; all that is needed is a bit of good will. If Jesus sees this little bit of good will in the soul, He hurries to give Himself to the soul, and nothing can stop Him, neither shortcomings nor falls — absolutely nothing. Jesus is anxious to help that soul, and if it is faithful to this grace from God, it can very soon

attain the highest holiness possible for a creature here on earth. God is very generous and does not deny His grace to anyone. Indeed He gives more than what we ask of Him. Faithfulness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit — that is the shortest route.

292 +When a soul loves God sincerely, it ought not fear anything in the spiritual life. Let it subject itself to the action of grace, and let it not impose any restraints on itself in communing with the Lord.

293 +When Jesus ravished me by His beauty and drew me to Himself, I then saw what in my soul was displeasing to Him and made up my mind to remove it, cost what it may; and aided by the grace of God I did remove it at once. This magnanimity pleased the Lord, and from that moment God started granting me higher graces. In my interior life I never reason; I do not analyze the ways in which God's Spirit leads me. It is enough for me to know that I am loved and that I love. Pure love enables me to know God and understand many mysteries. My confessor is an oracle for me. His word is sacred to me — I am speaking about the spiritual director [Father Sopocko].

294 +Once the Lord said to me, **Act like a beggar who does not back away when he gets more alms [than he asked for], but offers thanks the more fervently. You too, should not back away and say that you are not worthy of receiving greater graces when I give them to you. I know you are unworthy, but rejoice all the more and take as many (129) treasures from My Heart as you can carry, for then you will please Me more. And I will tell you one more thing — take these graces not only for yourself, but also for others; that is, encourage the souls with whom you come in contact to trust in My infinite mercy. Oh, how I love those souls who have complete confidence in Me — I will do everything for them.**

295 +At that moment Jesus asked me, **My child, how is your retreat going?** I answered, “But Jesus, You know how it is going.” **Yes, I know, but I want to hear it from your own lips and from your heart.** “O my Master, when You are leading me, everything goes smoothly, and I ask You, Lord, to never leave my side.” And Jesus said, **Yes, I will be with you always, if you always remain a little child and fear nothing. As I was your beginning here, so I will also be your end. Do not rely on**

creatures, even in the smallest things, because this displeases Me. I want to be alone in your soul. I will give light and strength to your soul, and you will learn from My representative that I am in you, and your uncertainty will vanish like mist before the rays of the sun.

296 +O Supreme Good, I want to love You as no one on earth has ever loved You before! I want to adore You with every moment of my life and unite my will closely to Your holy will. My life is not drab or monotonous, but it is varied like a garden of fragrant flowers, so that I don't know which flower to pick first, the lily of suffering or the rose of love or the violet of humility. I will not enumerate these treasures in which my every day abounds. It is a great thing to know how to make use of the present moment.

297 +Jesus, Supreme Light, grant me the grace of knowing myself, and pierce my dark soul with Your light, and fill the abyss of my soul with Your own self, for You alone [...]

298 O my Jesus, the Life, the Way and the Truth, I beg You to keep me close to You as a mother holds a baby to her bosom, for I am not only a helpless child, but an accumulation of misery and nothingness.

(130) +The Mystery of the Soul. Vilnius, 1934

299 When, on one occasion, my confessor told me to ask the Lord Jesus the meaning of the two rays in the image,²⁷ I answered, "Very well, I will ask the Lord."

During prayer I heard these words within me: **The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls...**

These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross.

These rays shield souls from the wrath of My Father. Happy is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him. I desire that the first Sunday after Easter be the Feast of Mercy.

300 **+Ask of my faithful servant [Father Sopocko] that, on this day, he tell the whole world of My great mercy; that whoever approaches the Fount of Life on this day will be granted complete remission of sins and punishment.**

+Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My mercy.

+Oh, how much I am hurt by a soul's distrust! Such a soul professes that I am Holy and Just, but does not believe that I am Mercy and does not trust in My Goodness. Even the devils glorify My Justice but do not believe in My Goodness.

My Heart rejoices in this title of Mercy.

301 **Proclaim that mercy is the greatest attribute of God. All the works of My hands are crowned with mercy.**

302 **(131)** +O Eternal Love, I want all the souls You have created to come to know You. I would like to be a priest, for then I would speak without cease about Your mercy to sinful souls drowned in despair. I would like to be a missionary and carry the light of faith to savage nations in order to make You known to souls, and to be completely consumed for them and to die a martyr's death, just as You died for them and for me. O Jesus, I know only too well that I can be a priest, a missionary, a preacher, and that I can die a martyr's death by completely emptying myself and denying myself for love of You, O Jesus, and of immortal souls.

303 Great love can change small things into great ones, and it is only love which lends value to our actions. And the purer our love becomes, the less there will be within us for the flames of suffering to feed upon, and the suffering will cease to be a suffering for us; it will become a delight! By the grace of God, I have received such a disposition of heart that I am never so happy as when I suffer for Jesus, whom I love with every beat of my heart.

Once, when I was suffering greatly, I left my work and escaped to Jesus and asked Him to give me His strength. After a very short prayer, I returned to my work filled with enthusiasm and joy. Then, one of the sisters [probably Sister Justine] said to me, "You must have many consolations today, Sister; you look so radiant. Surely, God is giving you

no suffering, but only consolations.” “You are greatly mistaken, Sister,” I answered, “for it is precisely when I suffer much that my joy is greater; and when I suffer less, my joy also is less.” However, that soul was letting me recognize that she does not understand what I was saying. I tried to explain to her that when we suffer much we have a great chance to show God that we love Him; but when we suffer little we have less occasion to show God our love; and when we do not suffer at all, our love is then neither great nor pure. By the grace of God, we can attain a point where suffering will become a delight to us, for love can work such things in pure souls.

304 **(132)** +O my Jesus, my only hope, thank You for the book which You have opened before my soul’s eyes. That book is Your Passion which You underwent for love of me. It is from this book that I have learned how to love God and souls. In this book there are found for us inexhaustible treasures. O Jesus, how few souls understand You in Your martyrdom of love! Oh, how great is the fire of purest love which burns in Your Most Sacred Heart! Happy the soul that has come to understand the love of the Heart of Jesus!

305 It is my greatest desire that souls should recognize You as their eternal happiness, that they should come to believe in Your goodness and glorify Your infinite mercy.

306 I asked the Lord to grant me the grace that my nature be immune and resist the influences that sometimes try to draw me away from the spirit of our rule and from the minor regulations. These minor transgressions are like little moths that try to destroy the spiritual life within us, and they surely will destroy it if the soul is aware of these minor transgressions and yet disregards them as small things. I can see nothing that is small in the religious life. Little matter if I am sometimes the object of vexation and jeers, as long as my spirit remains in harmony with the spirit of the rules, the vows, and the religious statutes.

O my Jesus, delight of my heart, You know my desires. I should like to hide from people’s sight so as to be like one alive and yet not living. I want to live pure as a wild flower; I want my love always to be turned to You, just as a flower that is always turning to the sun. I want the fragrance and the freshness of the flower of my heart to be always

preserved for You alone. I want to live beneath Your divine gaze, for You alone are enough for me. When I am with You, Jesus, I fear nothing, for nothing can do me harm.

307 **(133)** + 1934. Once during Lent, I saw a great light and a great darkness over house and chapel. I saw the struggle of these two powers...

308 1934, Holy Thursday. Jesus said to me, **I desire that you make an offering of yourself for sinners and especially for those souls who have lost hope in God's mercy.**

God and Souls. An Act of Oblation.

309 Before heaven and earth, before all the choirs of Angels, before the Most Holy Virgin Mary, before all the Powers of heaven, I declare to the One Triune God that today, in union with Jesus Christ, Redeemer of souls, I make a voluntary offering of myself for the conversion of sinners, especially for those souls who have lost hope in God's mercy. This offering consists in my accepting, with total subjection to God's will, all the sufferings, fears and terrors with which sinners are filled. In return, I give them all the consolations which my soul receives from my communion with God. In a word, I offer everything for them: Holy Masses, Holy Communions, penances, mortifications, prayers. I do not fear the blows, blows of divine justice, because I am united with Jesus. O my God, in this way I want to make amends to You for the souls that do not trust in Your goodness. I hope against all hope in the ocean of Your mercy. My Lord and my God, my portion — my portion forever, I do not base this act of oblation on my own strength, but on the strength that flows from the merits of Jesus Christ. I will daily repeat this act of self-oblation by pronouncing the following prayer which You Yourself have taught me, Jesus:

“O Blood and Water which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a Fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You!”

S. M. Faustina of the Blessed Sacrament

Holy Thursday, during Holy Mass, March 29, 1934.

310 **(134)** — **I am giving you a share in the redemption of mankind. You**

are solace in My dying hour.

311 When I received permission from my confessor [Father Sopocko] to make this act of oblation, I soon learned that it was pleasing to God, because I immediately began to experience its effects. In a moment my soul became like a stone — dried up, filled with torment, and disquiet. All sorts of blasphemies and curses kept pressing upon my ears. Distrust and despair invaded my heart. This is the condition of the poor people, which I have taken upon myself. At first, I was very much frightened by these horrible things, but during the first [opportune] confession, I was set at peace.

312 +Once when I went outside the convent to go to confession [St. Michael's Church], I chanced upon my confessor [Father Sopocko] saying Mass just then. After a while, I saw the Child Jesus on the altar, joyfully and playfully holding out His hands to him. But a moment later the priest took the beautiful Child into his hands, broke Him up and ate Him alive. At the first instant I felt a dislike for the priest for having done this to Jesus, but I was immediately enlightened in the matter and understood that this priest was very pleasing to God.

313 +Once, when I was visiting the artist [Eugene Kazimirowski] who was painting the image, and saw that it was not as beautiful as Jesus is, I felt very sad about it, but I hid this deep in my heart. When we had left the artist's house, Mother Superior [Irene] stayed in town to attend to some matters while I returned home alone. I went immediately to the chapel and wept a good deal. I said to the Lord, "Who will paint You as beautiful as You are?" Then I heard these words: **Not in the beauty of the color, nor of the brush lies the greatness of this image, but in My grace.**

314 +When I went to the garden one afternoon, my Guardian Angel said to me, "Pray for the dying." And so I began at once to pray the rosary with the gardeners for the dying. After the rosary, we said various prayers for the dying. After the prayers, the wards began to chat gayly among themselves. (135) In spite of the noise they were making, I heard these words in my soul: "Pray for me!" But as I could not understand these words very well, I moved a few steps away from the wards, trying to think who it could be who was asking me to pray. Then I heard the

words: “I am Sister”⁷⁸ This sister was in Warsaw while I was, at the time, in Vilnius. “Pray for me until I tell you to stop. I am dying.” Immediately, I began to pray fervently for her, [addressing myself] to the expiring Heart of Jesus. She gave me no respite, and I kept praying from three [o’clock] until five. At five, I heard the words: “Thank you!” and I understood that she had died. But during Holy Mass, on the following day, I continued to pray fervently for her soul. In the afternoon, a postcard came saying that Sister ... had died at such and such a time. I understood that it was at the same hour when she had said to me, “Pray for me.”

315 +Mother of God, Your soul was plunged into a sea of bitterness; look upon Your child and teach her to suffer and to love while suffering. Fortify my soul that pain will not break it. Mother of grace, teach me to live by [the power of] God.

316 Once, the Mother of God came to visit me. She was sad. Her eyes were cast down. She made it clear that She wanted to say something, and yet, on the other hand, it was as if She did not want to speak to me about it. When I understood this, I began to beg the Mother of God to tell me and to look at me. Just then Mary looked at me with a warm smile and said, *You are going to experience certain sufferings because of an illness and the doctors; you will also suffer much because of the image, but do not be afraid of anything.* The next day I fell ill and suffered a great deal, just as the Mother of God had told me. But my soul was ready for the sufferings. Suffering is a constant companion of my life.

317 O my God, my only hope, I have placed all my trust in You, and I know I shall not be disappointed.

318 **(136)** I often feel God’s presence after Holy Communion in a special and tangible way. I know God is in my heart. And the fact that I feel Him in my heart does not interfere with my duties. Even when I am dealing with very important matters which require attention, I do not lose the presence of God in my soul, and I am closely united with Him. With Him I go to work, with Him I go for recreation, with Him I suffer, with Him I rejoice; I live in Him and He in me. I am never alone, because He is my constant companion. He is present to me at every moment. Our intimacy is very close, through a union of blood and of life.

319 August 9, 1934. Night adoration on Thursdays.⁷⁹ I made my hour of adoration from eleven o'clock till midnight. I offered it for the conversion of hardened sinners, especially for those who have lost hope in God's mercy. I was reflecting on how much God had suffered and on how great was the love He had shown for us, and on the fact that we still do not believe that God loves us so much. O Jesus, who can understand this? What suffering it is for our Savior! How can He convince us of His love if even His death cannot convince us? I called upon the whole of heaven to join me in making amends to the Lord for the ingratitude of certain souls.

320 Jesus made known to me how very pleasing to Him were prayers of atonement. He said to me, **The prayer of a humble and loving soul disarms the anger of My Father and draws down an ocean of blessings.** After the adoration, half way to my cell, I was surrounded by a pack of huge black dogs who were jumping and howling and trying to tear me to pieces. I realized that they were not dogs, but demons. One of them spoke up in a rage, "Because you have snatched so many souls away from us this night, we will tear you to pieces." I answered, "If that is the will of the most merciful God, tear me to pieces, for I have justly deserved it, because I am the most miserable of all sinners, and God is ever holy, just, and infinitely merciful." To these words all the demons answered as one, "Let us flee, for she is not alone; the Almighty is with her!" And they vanished like dust, like the noise of the road, while I continued on my way to my cell undisturbed, finishing my *Te Deum* and pondering the infinite and unfathomable mercy of God.

(137) August 12, 1934.

321 A sudden illness — a mortal suffering. It was not death, that is to say, a passing over to real life, but a taste of the sufferings of death. Although it gives us eternal life, death is dreadful. Suddenly, I felt sick, I gasped for breath, there was darkness before my eyes, my limbs grew numb — and there was a terrible suffocation. Even a moment of such suffocation is extremely long.... There also comes a strange fear, in spite of trust. I wanted to receive the last sacraments, but it was extremely difficult to make a confession even though I desired to do so. A person does not know what he is saying; not finishing one thing, he begins another.

Oh, may God keep every soul from delaying confession until the last hour! I understood the great power of the priest's words when they are poured out upon the sick person's soul. When I asked my spiritual father whether I was ready to stand before the Lord and whether I could be at peace, I received the reply "You can be completely at peace, not only right now but after each weekly confession." Great is the divine grace that accompanies these words of the priest. The soul feels power and courage for battle.

322 O my Congregation, my mother, how sweet it is to live in you, but it is even better to die in you!

323 After I received the last sacraments, there was a definite improvement. I remained alone. This lasted for half an hour and then came another attack; but this one was not so strong, as the doctor intervened.

I united my sufferings with the sufferings of Jesus and offered them for myself and for the conversion of souls who do not trust in the goodness of God. Suddenly, my cell was filled with black figures full of anger and hatred for me. One of them said, "Be damned, you and He who is within you, for you are beginning to torment us even in hell." As soon as I said, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," the figures vanished in a sudden whirl.

324 The next day, I felt very weak, but experienced no further suffering. After Holy Communion, I saw the Lord Jesus just as I had seen Him during one adoration. The Lord's gaze pierced my soul through and through, and not even the least speck of dust escaped His notice. And I said to Jesus, "Jesus, I thought You were going to take me." And Jesus answered, **My will has not yet been fully accomplished in you; you will still remain on earth, but not for long. I am well pleased with your trust, but your love should be more ardent. (138) Pure love gives the soul strength at the very moment of dying. When I was dying on the cross, I was not thinking about Myself, but about poor sinners, and I prayed for them to My Father. I want your last moments to be completely similar to Mine on the cross. There is but one price at which souls are bought, and that is suffering united to My suffering on the cross. Pure love understands these words; carnal love will never understand them.**

325 1934. On the day of the Assumption of the Mother of God, I did not assist at Holy Mass. The woman doctor⁸⁰ did not allow me; but I prayed fervently in my cell. After a short time, I saw the Mother of God, unspeakably beautiful. She said to me, My daughter, what I demand from you is prayer, prayer, and once again prayer, for the world and especially for your country. For nine days receive Holy Communion in atonement and unite yourself closely to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. During these nine days you will stand before God as an offering; always and everywhere, at all times and places, day or night, whenever you wake up, pray in the spirit. In spirit, one can always remain in prayer.

326 Once, Jesus said to me, **My gaze from this image is like My gaze from the cross.**

327 Once, my confessor [Father Sopocko] asked me where the inscription should be placed, because there was not enough space in the picture for everything. I answered, “I will pray and give you an answer next week.” When I left the confessional and was passing before the Blessed Sacrament, I received an inner understanding about the inscription. Jesus reminded me of what He had told me the first time; namely, that these three words must be clearly in evidence: “Jesus, I trust in You.” [“Jezu, Ufam Tobie.”] I understood that Jesus wanted the whole formula to be there, but He gave no direct orders to this effect as He did for these three words.

I am offering people a vessel with which they are to keep coming for graces to the fountain of mercy. That vessel is this image with the signature: “Jesus, I trust in You.”

328 O purest Love, rule in all Your plenitude in my heart and help me to do Your holy will most faithfully!

329 (139) Toward the end of a three-day retreat, I saw myself walking along a rough path. I kept stumbling continually, and I saw following me the figure of a person who kept supporting me. I was not happy with this and asked the person to leave me alone, as I wanted to walk on my own. But the figure, whom I could not recognize, did not leave me for a moment. I got impatient and turned around and pushed the person away from me. At that moment I saw that it was Mother Superior [Irene], and at the same

moment I saw that it was not Mother Superior, but the Lord Jesus who looked deeply into me and gave me to understand how painful it was to Him when I did not, even in the smallest things, do my Superior's will, **which is My will**, [He said]. I asked pardon of the Lord and took the warning very much to heart.

330 +Once, the confessor told me to pray for his intention, and I began a novena to the Mother of God. This novena consisted in the prayer, "Hail, Holy Queen," recited nine times. Toward the end of the novena I saw the Mother of God with the Infant Jesus in Her arms, and I also saw my confessor kneeling at Her feet and talking with Her. I did not understand what he was saying to Her, because I was busy talking with the Infant Jesus, who came down from His Mother's arms and approached me. I could not stop wondering at His beauty. I heard a few of the words that the Mother of God spoke to him [i.e., my confessor] but not everything. The words were: *I am not only the Queen of Heaven, but also the Mother of Mercy and your Mother*. And at that moment She stretched out her right hand, in which She was clasping her mantle, and She covered the priest with it. At that moment, the vision vanished.

331 Oh, how great a grace it is to have a spiritual director! One makes more rapid progress in virtue, sees the will of God more clearly, fulfills it more faithfully, and follows a road that is sure and free of dangers. The director knows how to avoid the rocks against which the soul could be shattered. The Lord gave me this grace rather late, to be sure, but I rejoice in it greatly, seeing how God inclines His will to my director's wishes. I will mention just one incident out of a thousand that have happened to me. As I usually do, I asked the Lord Jesus one evening to give me the points for next day's meditation. I received the answer: **Meditate on the Prophet Jonah and his mission**. I thanked the Lord, but began to think within myself of how different that subject was **(140)** from the others. But with all my soul I strove to meditate about it, and I recognized myself in the person of the prophet, in the sense that often I, too, try to make excuses to the Lord, claiming that someone else would do His holy will better [than I could], and not understanding that God can do all things and that His omnipotence will be all the more manifest if the tool is poorer. God made this clear to me in the following way. That afternoon, there was confession for the community. When I presented to the director of my

soul the fear that seized me because of this mission for which God was using me, clumsy tool that I was, my spiritual father answered that, willing or not, we must carry out the will of God, and he gave me the Prophet Jonah as an example. After the confession, I wondered how the confessor knew that God had told me to meditate about Jonah; surely I myself had not told him. Then I heard these words: **When the priest acts in My place, he does not act of himself, but I act through him. His wishes are Mine.** I can see how Jesus defends His representatives. He himself enters into their actions.

332 +Thursday. When I started the Holy Hour, I wanted to immerse myself in the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Olives. Then I heard a voice in my soul: **Meditate on the mystery of the Incarnation.** And suddenly the Infant Jesus appeared before me, radiant with beauty. He told me how much God is pleased with simplicity in a soul. **Although My greatness is beyond understanding, I commune only with those who are little. I demand of you a childlike spirit.**

333 I now see clearly how God acts through the confessor and how faithfully He keeps His promises. Two weeks ago, my confessor told me to reflect upon this spiritual childhood. It was somewhat difficult at first, but my confessor, disregarding my difficulties, told me to continue to reflect upon spiritual childhood. “In practice, this spiritual childhood,” [he said,] “should manifest itself in this way: a child does not worry about the past or the future, but makes use of the present moment. I want to emphasize that spiritual childlikeness in you, Sister, and I place great stress upon it.” I can see how God bows down to my confessor’s wishes; He does not show Himself to me at this time as a Teacher in the fullness of His strength and human adulthood, but as a little Child. The God who is beyond all understanding stoops to me under the appearance of a little Child.

334 But the eye of my soul does not stop at this appearance. Although You take the form of a little Child, I see in You the immortal, infinite Lord of lords, whom pure spirits adore, **(141)** day and night, and for whom the hearts of the Seraphim burn with the fire of purest love. O Christ, O Jesus, I want to surpass them in my love for You! I apologize to you, O pure spirits, for my boldness in comparing myself to you. I, this chasm of

misery, this abyss of misery; and You, O God, who are the incomprehensible abyss of mercy, swallow me up as the heat of the sun swallows up a drop of dew! A loving look from You will fill up any abyss. I feel immensely happy at the greatness of God. Seeing God's greatness is more than enough to make me happy throughout all eternity!

335 Once, when I saw Jesus in the form of a small child, I asked, "Jesus, why do you now take on the form of a child when You commune with me? In spite of this, I still see in You the infinite God, my Lord and Creator." Jesus replied that until I learned simplicity and humility, He would commune with me as a little child.

336 1934. During Holy Mass, when the Lord Jesus was exposed in the Blessed Sacrament, before Holy Communion, I saw two rays coming out from the Blessed Host, just as they are painted in the image, one of them red and the other pale. And they were reflected on each of the sisters and wards, but not on all in the same way. On some of them the rays were barely visible. It was the last day of the children's retreat.

337 November 22, 1934. +On one occasion, my spiritual director [Father Sopocko] told me to look carefully into myself and to examine whether I had any attachment to some particular object or creature, or even to myself, or whether I engaged in useless chatter, "for all these things," [he said,] "get in the way of the Lord Jesus, who wants complete freedom in directing your soul. God is jealous of our hearts and wants us to love Him alone."

338 When I started to look deep within myself, I did not find any attachment to anything, but as in all things that concern me, so also in this matter, I was afraid and distrustful of myself. Tired out by this detailed self-examination, I went before the Blessed Sacrament and asked Jesus with all my heart, "Jesus, my Spouse, Treasure of my heart, **(142)** You know that I know You alone and that I have no other love but You; but, Jesus, if I were about to become attached to anything that is not You, I beg and entreat You, Jesus, by the power of Your mercy, let instant death descend upon me, for I prefer to die a thousand times than to be unfaithful to You once in even the smallest thing."

339 At that moment, Jesus suddenly stood before me, coming I know not

from where, radiant with unbelievable beauty, clothed in a white garment, with uplifted arms, and He spoke these words to me, **My daughter, your heart is My repose; it is My delight. I find in it everything that is refused Me by so many souls. Tell this to My representative.** And an instant later, I saw nothing, but a whole ocean of consolations entered my soul.

340 I know now that nothing can put a stop to my love for You, Jesus, neither suffering, nor adversity, nor fire nor the sword, nor death itself. I feel stronger than all these things. Nothing can compare with love. I see that the smallest things done by a soul that loves God sincerely have an enormous value in His Holy eyes.

341 November 5, 1934. One morning, when it was my duty to open the gate to let out our people who deliver baked goods, I entered the little chapel to visit Jesus for a minute and to renew the intentions of the day. Today, Jesus, I offer You all my sufferings, mortifications and prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father, so that he may approve the Feast of Mercy. But, Jesus, I have one more word to say to You: I am very surprised that You bid me to talk about this Feast of Mercy, for they tell me that there is already such a feast⁸¹ and so why should I talk about it? And Jesus said to me, And who knows anything about this feast? No one! Even those who should be proclaiming My mercy and teaching people about it often do not know about it themselves. That is why I want the image to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter, and I want it to be venerated publicly so that every soul may know about it.

Make a novena for the Holy Father's intention. It should consist of thirty-three acts; that is, repetition that many times of the short prayer — which I have taught you — to The Divine Mercy.

342 **(143)** Suffering is the greatest treasure on earth; it purifies the soul. In suffering we learn who is our true friend.

343 True love is measured by the thermometer of suffering. Jesus, I thank You for the little daily crosses, for opposition to my endeavors, for the hardships of communal life, for the misinterpretation of my intentions, for humiliations at the hands of others, for the harsh way in which we are treated, for false suspicions, for poor health and loss of strength, for self-

denial, for dying to myself, for lack of recognition in everything, for the upsetting of all my plans.

Thank You, Jesus, for interior sufferings, for dryness of spirit, for terrors, fears and uncertainties, for the darkness and the deep interior night, for temptations and various ordeals, for torments too difficult to describe, especially for those which no one will understand, for the hour of death with its fierce struggle and all its bitterness.

I thank You, Jesus, You who first drank the cup of bitterness before You gave it to me, in a much milder form. I put my lips to this cup of Your holy will. Let all be done according to Your good pleasure; let that which Your wisdom ordained before the ages be done to me. I want to drink the cup to its last drop, and not seek to know the reason why. In bitterness is my joy, in hopelessness is my trust. In You, O Lord, all is good, all is a gift of Your paternal Heart. I do not prefer consolations over bitterness or bitterness over consolations, but thank You, O Jesus, for everything! It is my delight to fix my gaze upon You, O incomprehensible God! My spirit abides in these mysterious dwelling places, and there I am at home. I know very well the dwelling place of my Spouse. I feel there is not a single drop of blood in me that does not burn with love for You.

O Uncreated Beauty, whoever comes to know You once cannot love anything else. I can feel the bottomless abyss of my soul, and nothing will fill it but God Himself. I feel that I am drowned in Him like a single grain of sand in a bottomless ocean.

(144) December 20, 1934.

344 One evening as I entered my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus exposed in the monstrance under the open sky, as it seemed. At the feet of Jesus I saw my confessor, and behind him a great number of the highest ranking ecclesiastics, clothed in vestments the like of which I had never seen except in this vision; and behind them, groups of religious from various orders; and further still I saw enormous crowds of people, which extended far beyond my vision. I saw the two rays coming out from the Host, as in the image, closely united but not intermingled; and they passed through the hands of my confessor, and then through the hands of the clergy and from their hands to the people, and then they returned to

the Host... and at that moment I saw myself once again in the cell which I had just entered.

345 December 22, 1934. When it was possible for me to go to confession during the week, I happened to get there when my confessor was saying Holy Mass. During the third part of the Mass, I saw the Infant Jesus, a little smaller than usual and with this difference, that He was wearing a violet tunic. He usually has a white one.

346 December 24, 1934. The Vigil of Christmas. During the morning Mass, I felt the closeness of God. Though I was hardly aware of it, my spirit was drowned in God. Suddenly, I heard these words: **You are My delightful dwelling place; My Spirit rests in you.** After these words, I felt the Lord looking into the depths of my heart; and seeing my misery, I humbled myself in spirit and admired the immense mercy of God, that the Most High Lord would approach such misery.

During Holy Communion, joy filled my soul. I felt that I am closely united to the Godhead. His omnipotence enveloped my whole being. Throughout the whole day I felt the closeness of God in a special manner; and although my duties prevented me throughout the whole day from going to chapel even for a moment, there was not a moment when I was not united with God. I felt Him within **(145)** me more distinctly than ever. Unceasingly greeting the Mother of God and entering into Her spirit, I begged Her to teach me true love of God. And then I heard these words: *I will share with you the secret of My happiness this night during Holy Mass.*

We had supper before six o'clock. Despite all the joy and the external noise accompanying the sharing of the wafer and the mutual exchange of good wishes, I did not for a moment lose the awareness of God's presence. After supper, we hurried away to finish our work, and at nine I was able to go to the chapel for adoration. I was allowed to stay up and wait for the Midnight Mass. I was delighted to have free time from nine until midnight. From nine to ten o'clock I offered my adoration for my parents and my whole family. From ten to eleven, I offered it for the intention of my spiritual director, in the first place thanking God for granting me this great visible help here on earth, just as He had promised me, and I also asked God to grant him the necessary light so that he could

get to know my soul and guide me according to God's good pleasure. And from eleven to twelve I prayed for the Holy Church and the clergy, for sinners, for the missions, and for our houses. I offered the indulgences for the souls in purgatory.

Twelve O'clock, December 25, 1934

347 Midnight Mass. As Holy Mass began, I immediately felt a great interior recollection; joy filled my soul. During the offertory, I saw Jesus on the altar, incomparably beautiful. The whole time the Infant kept looking at everyone, stretching out His little hands. During the elevation, the Child was not looking towards the chapel but up to heaven. After the elevation, He looked at us again, but just for a short while, because He was broken up and eaten by the priest in the usual manner. His pinafore was now white. The next day I saw the same thing, and on the third day as well. It is difficult for me to express the joy of my soul. **(145)** The vision was repeated at the three Masses in the same way as in the first ones.

1934.

348 The first Thursday after Christmas. I completely forgot it was Thursday and so did not make my adoration. At nine o'clock I went directly to the dormitory with the other sisters. But strangely enough, I could not fall asleep. It seemed to me that I had not yet done something that I was supposed to do. Mentally, I reviewed all my duties, and could not recollect anything. This lasted until ten o'clock. At ten, I saw the Sorrowful Face of Jesus. Then Jesus spoke these words to me: **I have been waiting to share My suffering with you, for who can understand My suffering better than My spouse?** I asked pardon of Jesus for my coldness. Ashamed and not daring to look at the Lord Jesus, but with a contrite heart, I asked Him to give me one thorn from His crown. He answered that He would grant me this favor, but not until tomorrow, and immediately the vision disappeared.

349 In the morning, during meditation, I felt a painful thorn in the left side of my head. The suffering continued all day. I meditated continually about how Jesus had been able to endure the pain of so many thorns which made up His crown. I joined my suffering to the sufferings of Jesus and offered it for sinners. At four o'clock when I came for adoration, I saw

one of our wards offending God greatly by sins of impure thoughts. I also saw a certain person who was the cause of her sin. My soul was pierced with fear, and I asked God, for the sake of Jesus' pain, to snatch her from this terrible misery.

350 Jesus answered that He would grant her that favor, not for her sake, but for the sake of my request. Now I understood how much we ought to pray for sinners, and especially for our wards.

Our life is truly apostolic; I cannot imagine a religious living in one of our houses; that is, in our Community, and not having an apostolic spirit. Zeal for the salvation of souls should burn in our hearts.

351 (147) O my God, how sweet it is to suffer for You, suffer in the most secret recesses of the heart, in the greatest hiddenness, to burn like a sacrifice noticed by no one, pure as crystal, with no consolation or compassion. My spirit burns in active love. I waste no time in dreaming. I take every moment singly as it comes, for this is within my power. The past does not belong to me; the future is not mine; with all my soul I try to make use of the present moment.

January 4, 1935. The first chapter⁸² of Mother Borgia.⁸³

352 At the chapter, Mother [Borgia] stressed a life of faith and fidelity in small things. Half way through the chapter, I heard these words: **I desire that you would all have more faith at the present time. How great is My joy at the faithfulness of My spouse in the smallest things.** Then I looked at the crucifix and saw that Jesus' head was turned towards the refectory, and His lips were moving.

When I told Mother Superior about it, she answered, "You see, Sister, how Jesus demands that our life be a life of faith."

353 When Mother left for the chapel and I stayed to set the room in order, I heard these words: **Tell all the sisters that I demand that they live in the spirit of faith towards the superiors at this present time.** I begged my confessor to release me from this duty.

354 As I was talking to a certain person⁸⁴ who was to paint the image but, for certain reasons, was not painting it, I heard this voice in my soul: **I want**

her to be more obedient. I understood that our efforts, no matter how great, are not pleasing to God if they do not bear the seal of obedience; I am speaking about a religious soul. O God, how easy it is to know Your will in the convent! We religious have God's will set clearly before our eyes from morning till night, and in moments of uncertainty we have our superiors through whom God speaks.

355 **(148)** 1934-1935. New Year's Eve. I was given permission not to go to sleep, but rather pray in the chapel. One of the sisters had asked me to offer an hour of adoration for her. I said yes, and prayed for her for an hour. During the hour, God gave me to understand how very pleasing this soul was to Him.

I offered the second hour of adoration for the conversion of sinners, and I tried especially to offer expiation to God for the insults that were being committed against Him at this present moment. How greatly God is being offended!

I offered the third hour for my spiritual director. I fervently prayed for light for him in a particular matter.

Finally, the clock struck twelve, the last hour of the year. I finished it in the Name of the Holy Trinity, and I also started the first hour of the New Year in the Name of the Holy Trinity. I asked each of the Three Persons to bless me and, with great confidence, looked toward the New Year which certainly would not be sparing of suffering.

356 O Blessed Host, in whom is contained the testament of God's mercy for us, and especially for poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, in whom is contained the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus as proof of infinite mercy for us, and especially for poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, in whom is contained life eternal and of infinite mercy, dispensed in abundance to us and especially to poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, in whom is contained the mercy of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit toward us, and especially toward poor sinners.

(149) O Blessed Host, in whom is contained the infinite price of mercy

which will compensate for all our debts, and especially those of poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, in whom is contained the fountain of living water which springs from infinite mercy for us, and especially for poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, in whom is contained the fire of purest love which blazes forth from the bosom of the Eternal Father, as from an abyss of infinite mercy for us, and especially for poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, in whom is contained the medicine for all our infirmities, flowing from infinite mercy, as from a fount, for us and especially for poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, in whom is contained the union between God and us through His infinite mercy for us, and especially for poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, in whom are contained all the sentiments of the most sweet Heart of Jesus toward us, and especially poor sinners.

O Blessed Host, our only hope in all the sufferings and adversities of life.

O Blessed Host, our only hope in the midst of darkness and of storms within and without.

O Blessed Host, our only hope in life and at the hour of our death.

O Blessed Host, our only hope in the midst of adversities and floods of despair.

O Blessed Host, our only hope in the midst of falsehood and treason.

O Blessed Host, our only hope in the midst of the darkness and godlessness which inundate the earth.

O Blessed Host, our only hope in the longing and pain in which no one will understand us.

(150) O Blessed Host, our only hope in the toil and monotony of everyday life.

O Blessed Host, our only hope amid the ruin of our hopes and endeavors.

O Blessed Host, our only hope in the midst of the ravages of the enemy and the efforts of hell.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when the burdens are beyond my strength and I find my efforts are fruitless.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when storms toss my heart about and my fearful spirit tends to despair.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when my heart is about to tremble and mortal sweat moistens my brow.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when everything conspires against me and black despair creeps into my soul.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when my eyes will begin to grow dim to all temporal things and, for the first time, my spirit will behold the unknown worlds.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when my tasks will be beyond my strength and adversity will become my daily lot.

O Blessed Host I trust in You when the practice of virtue will appear difficult for me and my nature will grow rebellious.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when hostile blows will be aimed against me.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when my toils and efforts will be misjudged by others.

O Blessed Host, I trust in You when Your judgments will resound over me; it is then that I will trust in the sea of Your mercy.

357 +Most Holy Trinity, I trust in Your infinite mercy. God is my Father and so I, His child, have every claim to His divine Heart; and the greater the darkness, the more complete our trust should be.

358 I do not understand how it is possible not to trust in Him who can do all things. With Him, everything; without Him, nothing. He is Lord. He will not allow those who have placed all their trust in Him to be put to shame.

359 (151) January 10, 1935. +Thursday. In the evening during benediction,⁸⁵ such thoughts as these began to distress me: Is not perhaps all this that I am saying about God's great mercy just a lie or an illusion...? And I wanted to think about this for a while, when I heard a strong and clear inner voice saying, **Everything that you say about My goodness is true; language has no adequate expression to extol My goodness.** These words were so filled with power and so clear that I would give my life in declaring they came from God. I can tell this by the profound peace that accompanied them at that time and that still remains with me. This peace gives me such great strength and power that all difficulties, adversities, sufferings, and death itself are as nothing. This light gave me a glimpse of the truth that all my efforts to bring souls to know the mercy of the Lord are very pleasing to God. And from this springs such great joy in my soul that I do not know whether it could be any greater in heaven. Oh, if souls would only be willing to listen, at least a little, to the voice of conscience and the voice — that is, the inspirations — of the Holy Spirit! I say "at least a little," because once we open ourselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit, He Himself will fulfill what is lacking in us.

+New Year 1935

360 Jesus likes to intervene in the smallest details of our life, and He often fulfills secret wishes of mine that I sometimes hide from Him, although I know that from Him nothing can be hidden.

There is a custom among us of drawing by lot, on New Year's Day, special Patrons for ourselves for the whole year. In the morning during meditation, there arose within me a secret desire that the Eucharistic Jesus be my special Patron for this year also, as in the past. But, hiding this desire from my Beloved, I spoke to Him about everything else but that. When we came to refectory for breakfast, we blessed ourselves and began drawing our patrons. When I approached the holy cards on which the names of the patrons were written, without hesitation I took one, but I didn't read the name immediately (152) as I wanted to mortify myself for a few minutes. Suddenly, I heard a voice in my soul: **I am your patron. Read.** I looked at once at the inscription and read, "Patron for the Year 1935 — the Most Blessed Eucharist." My heart leapt with joy, and I

slipped quietly away from the sisters and went for a short visit before the Blessed Sacrament, where I poured out my heart. But Jesus sweetly admonished me that I should be, at that moment, together with the sisters. I went immediately in obedience to the rule.

Holy Trinity, One God,

361 incomprehensible in the greatness of Your mercy for creatures, and especially for poor sinners, You have made known the abyss of Your mercy, incomprehensible and unfathomable [as it is] to any mind, whether of man or angel. Our nothingness and our misery are drowned in Your greatness. O infinite goodness, who can ever praise You sufficiently? Can there be found a soul that understands You in Your love? O Jesus, there are such souls, but they are few.

362 +One day, during the morning meditation, I heard this voice: **I Myself am your Director; I was, I am, and I will be. And since you asked for visible help, I chose and gave you a director even before you had asked, for My work required this. Know that the faults you commit against him wound My Heart. Be especially on your guard against self-willfulness; even the smallest thing should bear the seal of obedience.**

With a crushed and humbled heart, I begged forgiveness of Jesus for these faults. I also begged pardon of my spiritual director and resolved to do nothing rather than to do many things wrongly.

363 O good Jesus, thank You for the great grace of making known to me what I am of myself: misery and sin, and nothing more. I can do only one thing of myself, and that is to offend You, O my God, because misery can do no more of itself than offend You, O infinite Goodness!

364 (153) +Once I was asked to pray for a certain soul. I decided at once to make a novena to the Merciful Lord to which I added a mortification; namely, that I would wear chains⁸⁶ on both legs throughout Holy Mass. I had been doing this already for three days when I went to confession and told my spiritual director that I had undertaken this mortification, presuming permission to do so. I had thought he would not object, but I heard the contrary; that is, that I should do nothing without permission. O

my Jesus, so it was willfulness again! But my falls do not discourage me; I know very well that I am misery [itself]. It was because of the condition of my health that I did not receive this permission, and my spiritual director was surprised that I had been allowing myself greater mortifications without his permission. I asked pardon for my self-willfulness, or rather for having presumed permission, and I asked him to change this mortification for another one.

365 My spiritual director replaced it with an interior mortification; namely, throughout Holy Mass I was to meditate on why the Lord Jesus had submitted to being baptized. The meditation was no mortification for me, for thinking about God is a delight and not a mortification; but there was a mortification of the will in that I was not doing [simply] what I like, but what I was told to do, and it is in this that interior mortification consists. When I left the confessional and started to recite my penance, I heard these words: **I have granted the grace you asked for on behalf of that soul, but not because of the mortification you chose for yourself. but because of the act of complete obedience to My representative did I grant grace to that soul for whom you interceded and begged mercy. Know that when you mortify your own self-will, then Mine reigns within you.**

366 O my Jesus, be patient with me. I will be more careful in the future. I will rely, not upon myself, but upon Your grace and Your very great goodness to miserable me.

367 (154) +On one occasion, Jesus gave me to know that when I pray for intentions which people are wont to entrust to me, He is always ready to grant His graces, but souls do not always want to accept them: **My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls, and especially for poor sinners. If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy. For them I dwell in the tabernacle as King of Mercy. I desire to bestow My graces upon souls, but they do not want to accept them. You, at least, come to Me as often as possible and take these graces they do not want to accept. In this way you will console My Heart. Oh, how indifferent are souls to so much goodness, to so many proofs of love! My Heart drinks**

only of the ingratitude and forgetfulness of souls living in the world. They have time for everything, but they have no time to come to Me for graces.

So I turn to you, you — chosen souls, will you also fail to understand the love of My Heart? Here, too, My Heart finds disappointment; I do not find complete surrender to My love. So many reservations, so much distrust, so much caution. To comfort you, let Me tell you that there are souls living in the world who love Me dearly. I dwell in their hearts with delight. But they are few. In convents too, there are souls that fill My Heart with joy. They bear My features; therefore the Heavenly Father looks upon them with special pleasure. They will be a marvel to Angels and men. Their number is very small. They are a defense for the world before the justice of the Heavenly Father and a means of obtaining mercy for the world. The love and sacrifice of these souls sustain the world in existence. The infidelity of a soul specially chosen by Me wounds My Heart most painfully. Such infidelities are swords which pierce My Heart.

368 (155) January 29, 1935. This Tuesday morning during meditation, I had an interior vision of the Holy Father saying Mass. After the Pater Noster, he talked to Jesus about that matter which Jesus had ordered me to tell him. Although I have not spoken to the Holy Father personally, this matter was taken care of by someone else [Father Sopocko⁸⁷]; at this moment, however, I knew by interior knowledge that the Holy Father was considering this matter, which will soon come to pass in accordance with the desires of Jesus.

369 Before the eight-day retreat, I went to my spiritual director and asked him for certain mortifications for the time of the retreat. However, I did not receive permission for everything I asked for, but for some things only. I received permission for one hour of meditation on the Passion of the Lord Jesus and for a certain humiliation. But I was a little dissatisfied at not receiving permission for everything I had asked. When we returned home, I dropped into the chapel for a moment, and then I heard this voice in my soul: **There is more merit to one hour of meditation on My sorrowful Passion than there is to a whole year of flagellation that draws blood; the contemplation of My painful wounds is of great**

profit to you, and it brings Me great joy. I am surprised that you still have not completely renounced your self-will, but I rejoice exceedingly that this change will be accomplished during the retreat.

370 That same day, when I was in church waiting for confession, I saw the same rays issuing from the monstrance and spreading throughout the church. This lasted all through the service. After the Benediction, [the rays shone out] to both sides and returned again to the monstrance. Their appearance was bright and transparent like crystal. I asked Jesus that He deign to light the fire of His love in all souls that were cold. Beneath these rays a heart will grow warm even if it were like a block of ice; even if it were hard as a rock, it will crumble into dust.

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(156) J.M.J. Vilnius, February 4, 1935

Eight-day retreat.

371 Jesus, King of Mercy, again the time has come when I am alone with You. Therefore I beg You, by all the love with which Your Heart burns, to destroy completely within me my self-love and, on the other hand, to enkindle in my heart the fire of Your purest love.

372 In the evening, after the conference, I heard these words: **I am with you. During this retreat, I will strengthen you in peace and in courage so that your strength will not fail in carrying out My designs. Therefore, you will cancel out your will absolutely in this retreat and, instead, My complete will shall be accomplished in you. Know that it will cost you much, so write these words on a clean sheet of paper: "From today on, my own will does not exist," and then cross out the page. And on the other side write these words: "From today on, I do the will of God everywhere, always, and in everything." Be afraid of nothing; love will give you strength and make the realization of this easy.**

373 In the fundamental meditation about the goal; that is, of choosing love: the soul must love; it has need of loving. The soul must divert the stream of its love, but not into the mud or into a vacuum, but into God. How I rejoice when I reflect on this, for I feel clearly that He Himself is in my

heart. Just Jesus alone! I love creatures insofar as they help me to become united with God. I love all people because I see the image of God in them.

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(158) J.M.J. Vilnius, February 4, 1935

From today on, I do the Will of God
everywhere, always, and in everything.^{[88](#)}

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(159) J.M.J. Vilnius, February 8, 1935

375 Particular interior practice; that is, the examination of conscience. Self-denial, denial of my own will.

- I. The denial of my reason. Subjecting it to the reason of those who represent God to me here on earth.
- II. The denial of my will. Doing the will of God, which is revealed in the will of those who represent God to me and which is contained in the rule of our order.
- III. The denial of my judgment. Accepting immediately and without reflection, analysis or reasoning all orders given by those who represent God to me.
- IV. The denial of my tongue. I will not give it the least bit of freedom; but in one case only I will give it complete freedom; that is, in proclaiming the glory of God. Whenever I receive Holy Communion, I will ask Jesus to fortify and cleanse my tongue that I may not injure my neighbor with it. That is why I have the greatest respect for the rule which speaks

about silence.

376 My Jesus, I trust that Your grace will help me to carry out these resolutions. Although the above points are contained in the vow of obedience, I want to practice these things in a special way, because this is the essence of the religious life. Merciful Jesus, I beg You fervently to enlighten my mind so that I may come to know You better, You who are the Infinite Being, and that I may get to know myself better, who am nothingness itself.

377 **(160)** Concerning Holy Confession. We should derive two kinds of profit from Holy Confession:

1. We come to confession to be healed;
2. We come to be educated — like a small child, our soul has constant need of education.

O my Jesus, I understand these words to their very depths, and I know from my own experience that, on its own strength, the soul will not go far; it will exert itself greatly and will do nothing for the glory of God; it will err continually, because our mind is darkened and does not know how to discern its own affairs. I shall pay special attention to two things: firstly, I will choose, in making my confession, that which humiliates me most, even if it be a trifle, but something that costs me much, and for that reason I will tell it; secondly, I will practice contrition, not only during confession, but during every self-examination, and I will arouse within myself an act of perfect contrition, especially when I am going to bed. One more word: a soul which sincerely wants to advance in perfection must observe strictly the advice given by the spiritual director. There is as much holiness as there is dependence.

378 Once, as I was talking with my spiritual director, I had an interior vision — quicker than lightning — of his soul in great suffering, in such agony that God touches very few souls with such fire. The suffering arises from this work. There will come a time when this work, which God is demanding so very much, will be as though utterly undone. And then God will act with great power, which will give evidence of its authenticity. It will be a new splendor for the Church, although it has

been dormant in it from long ago. That God is infinitely merciful, no one can deny. He desires everyone to know this before He comes again as Judge. He wants souls to come to know Him first as King of Mercy. When this triumph comes, we shall already have entered the new life in which there is no suffering. But before this, your soul [of the spiritual director] will be surfeited with bitterness at the sight of the destruction of your efforts. However, this will only appear to be so, because what God has once decided upon, He does not change. But although this destruction **(161)** will be such only in outward appearance, the suffering will be real. When will this happen? I do not know. How long will it last? I do not know.⁸⁹ But God has promised a great grace especially to you and to all those... who will proclaim My great mercy. I shall protect them Myself at the hour of death, as My own glory. And even if the sins of souls were as dark as night, when the sinner turns to My mercy, he gives Me the greatest praise and is the glory of My Passion. When a soul extols My goodness, Satan trembles before it and flees to the very bottom of hell.

379 During one of the adorations, Jesus promised me that: **With souls that have recourse to My mercy and with those that glorify and proclaim My great mercy to others, I will deal according to My infinite mercy at the hour of their death.**

My Heart is sorrowful, Jesus said, because even chosen souls do not understand the greatness of My mercy. Their relationship [with Me] is, in certain ways, imbued with mistrust. Oh, how much that wounds My Heart! Remember My Passion, and if you do not believe My words, at least believe My wounds.

380 I make no movement, no gesture after my own liking, because I am bound by grace; I always consider what is more pleasing to Jesus.

381 When meditating once on obedience, I heard these words: **In this meditation, the priest⁹⁰ is speaking particularly for you. Know that I am borrowing his lips.** I tried to listen most attentively to everything and to apply everything to my own heart, as in every meditation. When the priest said that an obedient soul was filled with the power of God... **Yes, when you are obedient I take away your weakness and replace it with My strength. I am very surprised that souls do not want to make that exchange with Me.** I said to the Lord, “Jesus, enlighten my heart, or else

I, too, will not understand much from these words.”

382 (162) I know that I live, not for myself, but for a great number of souls. I know that graces granted me are not for me alone, but for souls. O Jesus, the abyss of Your mercy has been poured into my soul, which is an abyss of misery itself. Thank You, Jesus, for the graces and the pieces of the Cross which You give me at each moment of my life.

383 At the beginning of the retreat, I saw, on the ceiling of the chapel, Jesus nailed to the Cross. He was looking at the sisters with great love, but not at all of them. There were three sisters at whom Jesus looked severely, for what reasons I do not know. I only know what a terrible thing it is to meet with such a look, which is the look of a severe Judge. That look was not directed at me, and yet I was paralyzed with terror. I still tremble as I write these words. I did not dare to say so much as a single word to Jesus. My physical strength failed me, and I thought I would not live to the end of the conference. The next day, I saw the same thing again, just as I had seen it the first time, and this time I dared to speak these words: “Jesus, how great is Your mercy!”

On the third day, that gaze of great kindness upon all the sisters, except the three, was again repeated. I gathered up my courage, which drew its force from love of neighbor, and I said to the Lord, “You, who are Mercy Itself, as You Yourself told me, I beg You by the power of Your mercy, to look then with kindness at these three sisters as well. And if this is not in accord with Your wisdom, I ask You for an exchange: turn to them the kind look meant for my soul, and let Your severe gaze at their souls be turned on me.” Jesus then said to me these words: **My daughter, for the sake of your sincere and generous love, I grant them many graces although they are not asking Me for them. But I am doing so because of the promise I have made to you.** And at that moment, He turned a merciful look towards those three sisters as well. My heart leapt with joy to see the goodness of God.

384 (163) When I stayed for adoration from nine to ten o’clock, four other sisters stayed, too. When I approached the altar and began to meditate on the Passion of the Lord Jesus, a terrible pain immediately filled my soul because of the ingratitude of so many souls living in the world; but particularly painful was the ingratitude of souls especially chosen by

God. There is no notion or comparison [which can describe it]. At the sight of this blackest ungratefulness I felt as though my heart were torn open; my strength failed me completely, and I fell on my face, not attempting to hide my loud cries. Each time I thought of God's great mercy and of the ingratitude of souls, pain stabbed at my heart, and I understood how painfully it wounded the sweetest Heart of Jesus. With a burning heart, I renewed my act of self-oblation on behalf of sinners.

385 With joy and longing, I have pressed my lips to the bitterness of the cup which I receive each day at Holy Mass. It is the share which Jesus has allotted to me for each moment, and I will not relinquish it to anyone. I will comfort the most sweet Eucharistic Heart continuously and will play harmonious melodies on the strings of my heart. Suffering is the most harmonious melody of all. I will assiduously search out that which will make Your Heart rejoice today!

The days of my life are not monotonous. When dark clouds cover the sun, like the eagle I will try to brave the billows and make known to others that the sun is not dying out.

386 I feel that God will let me draw aside the veils [of heaven] so that the earth will not doubt His goodness. God is not subject to eclipse or change. He is forever one and the same; nothing can contradict His will. I feel within myself a power greater than human. I feel courage and strength thanks to the grace that dwells in me. I understand souls who are suffering against hope, for I have gone through that fire myself. But God will not give [us anything] beyond our strength. Often have I lived hoping against hope, and have advanced my hope to complete trust in God. Let that which He has ordained from all ages happen to me.

(164) A general principle.

387 It would be a very ugly thing for a religious to seek relief from suffering.

388 See what grace and reflection made out of the greatest criminal. He who is dying has much love: "Remember me when You are in paradise." Heartfelt repentance immediately transforms the soul. The spiritual life is to be lived earnestly and sincerely.

389 Love must be reciprocal. If Jesus tasted the fullness of bitterness for me,

then I, His bride, will accept all bitterness as proof of my love for Him.

390 He who knows how to forgive prepares for himself many graces from God. As often as I look upon the cross, so often will I forgive with all my heart.

391 Through Holy Baptism, we entered into union with other souls. Death tightens the bonds of love. I ought always to be of help to others. If I am a good religious, I will be useful, not only to the Order, but to the whole Country as well.

392 The Lord God grants His graces in two ways: by inspiration and by enlightenment. If we ask God for a grace, He will give it to us; but let us be willing to accept it. And in order to accept it, self-denial is needed. Love does not consist in words or feelings, but in deeds. It is an act of the will; it is a gift; that is to say, a giving. The reason, the will, the heart — these three faculties must be exercised during prayer. I will rise from the dead in Jesus, but first I must live in Him. If I do not separate myself from the Cross, then the Gospel will be revealed in me. Jesus in me makes up for all my deficiencies. His grace operates without ceasing. The Holy Trinity grants me Its life abundantly, by the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Three Divine Persons live in me. When God loves, He loves with all His Being, with all the power of His Being. If God has loved me in this way, how should I respond — I, His spouse?

393 (165) During one conference, Jesus said to me, **You are a sweet grape in a chosen cluster; I want others to have a share in the juice that is flowing within you.**

394 During the renewal of the vows,⁹¹ I saw the Lord Jesus on the Epistle side [of the altar], wearing a white garment with a golden belt and holding a terrible sword in His hand. This lasted until the moment when the sisters began to renew their vows. Then I saw a resplendence beyond compare and, in front of this brilliance, a white cloud in the shape of a scale. Then Jesus approached and put the sword on one side of the scale, and it fell heavily towards the ground until it was about to touch it. Just then, the sisters finished renewing their vows. Then I saw Angels who took something from each of the sisters and placed it in a golden vessel somewhat in the shape of a thurible. When they had collected it from all

the sisters and placed the vessel on the other side of the scale, it immediately outweighed and raised up the side on which the sword had been laid. At that moment, a flame issued forth from the thurible, and it reached all the way to the brilliance. Then I heard a voice coming from the brilliance: **Put the sword back in its place; the sacrifice is greater.** Then Jesus gave us His blessing, and all I had seen vanished. The sisters had already begun to receive Holy Communion. When I received Holy Communion, my soul was filled with such great joy that I am unable to describe it.

395 [February] 15, 1935. A visit for a few days to my family home⁹² to see my dying mother.

When I learned that my mother was seriously ill and near death, and that she had asked that I come home, as she wanted to see me once more before dying, a host of emotions were awakened in my heart. As a child who sincerely loves its mother, I wanted very much to fulfill her wish. But I left this to God and resigned myself completely to His will. Paying no heed to the ache in my heart, I followed God's will. On the morning of my name day, February fifteen, **(166)** Mother Superior gave me a second letter from my family and granted me permission to go to my parents' home to fulfill the wish and request of my dying mother. I began at once to make the necessary preparations for the journey and left Vilnius in the evening. I offered the whole night for my seriously ill mother, that God might grant her the grace of losing none of the merits of her suffering.

396 My traveling companions were very kind; several women of the Sodality of Mary were in the same compartment with me. I sensed that one of them was suffering greatly and fighting a difficult battle in her soul. I began to pray in spirit for this soul. At eleven o'clock these women went to another compartment for a chat, leaving only the two of us behind in the carriage. I could feel that my prayer was causing this soul's struggle to become even fiercer. I did not console her, but prayed all the more fervently. Finally, the lady turned to me and asked if she was obliged to fulfill a certain promise which she had made to God. At that moment, I received inner knowledge of the promise and replied, "You are absolutely obliged to keep it, or else you will be miserable for the rest of your life. This thought will pursue you everywhere and give you no

peace.” Surprised at my answer, she opened her soul to me.

She was a schoolteacher. When she was about to take her examinations, she had promised God that if she did well in her examinations she would devote herself to His service; that is, enter a religious congregation. She passed the examinations very well. “But,” she said, “when I entered into the hustle and bustle of the world, I no longer wanted to enter a convent. However, my conscience has given me no peace, and despite amusements I am always unhappy.”

After a lengthy conversation, she was completely changed and told me that she would immediately take steps to enter a convent. She asked me to pray for her, and I felt that God would be generous with His grace.

397 That morning I arrived in Warsaw, and at eight o’clock that evening I was already at home. What a joy it was for my parents and for the whole family! It is difficult to describe it. **(167)** My mother’s health had improved a bit, but the doctor gave no hope of complete recovery. After greeting each other, we knelt down to thank God for the grace of being able to be together once again in this life.

398 When I saw how my father prayed, I was very much ashamed that, after so many years in the convent, I was not able to pray with such sincerity and fervor. And so I never cease thanking God for such parents.

399 Oh, how everything had changed beyond recognition during those ten years! The garden had been so small, and now I could not recognize it. My brothers and sisters had still been children, and now they were all grown up. I was surprised that I did not find them as they had been when we parted. Stanley accompanied me to church every day. I felt that he was very pleasing to God.

400 On the last day, when everyone had left the church, I went before the Blessed Sacrament with him, and together we recited the Te Deum. After a moment of silence, I offered his soul to the Sweetest Heart of Jesus. How easy it was to pray in that little church! I remembered all the graces that I had received there, and which I had not understood at the time and had so often abused. I wondered how I could have been so blind. And as I was thus regretting my blindness, I suddenly saw the Lord Jesus, radiant

with unspeakable beauty, and He said to me with kindness, **My chosen one, I will give you even greater graces that you may be the witness of My infinite mercy throughout all eternity.**

401 The days at home passed in much company, as everybody wanted to see me and talk with me. Often I could count as many as twenty-five people there. They listened with great interest to my accounts of the lives of the saints. It seemed to me that our house was truly the house of God, as each evening we talked about nothing but God. When, tired from these talks and yearning for solitude and silence, I quietly slipped out into the garden in the evening so I could converse with God alone, even in this I was unsuccessful; immediately my brothers and sisters came and took me into the house and, once again, I had to talk, with all those eyes fixed on me. **(168)** But I struck on one way of getting some respite; I asked my brothers to sing for me, inasmuch as they had lovely voices; and besides, one played the violin and another, the mandolin. And during this time I was able to devote myself to interior prayer without shunning their company.

What also cost me a lot was that I had to kiss the children. The women I knew came with their children and asked me to take them in my arms, at least for a moment, and kiss them. They regarded this as a great favor, and for me it was a chance to practice virtue, since many of the children were quite dirty. But in order to overcome my feelings and show no repugnance, I would kiss such a dirty child twice. One of these friends came with a child whose eyes were diseased and filled with pus, and she said to me, “Sister, take it in your arms for a moment, please.” My nature recoiled, but not paying attention to anything, I took the child and kissed it twice, right on the infection, asking God to heal it.

I had many opportunities to practice virtue. I listened to people pour out their grievances, and I saw that no heart was joyful, because no heart truly loved God; and this did not surprise me at all. I was very sorry not to have seen two of my sisters. I felt interiorly that their souls were in great danger. Pain gripped my heart at the thought of them. Once, when I felt very close to God, I fervently asked the Lord to grant them grace, and the Lord answered me, **I am granting them not only necessary graces, but special graces as well.** I understood that the Lord would call them to

a greater union with Him. I rejoice immensely that such great love reigns in our family.

402 As I was taking leave of my parents and asking for their blessing, I felt the power of the grace of God being poured out upon my soul. My father, my mother and my godmother blessed me with tears in their eyes, wished me the greatest faithfulness to God's graces, and begged me never to forget how many graces God had granted me in calling me to the religious life. They asked me to pray for them. **(169)** Although everyone was crying, I did not shed a single tear; I tried to be brave and comforted them as best I could, reminding them of heaven where there would be no more parting. Stanley walked me to the car. I told him how much God loves pure souls and assured him God was satisfied with him. When I was telling him about the goodness of God and of how He thinks of us, he burst out crying like a little child, and I was not surprised, for this was a pure soul and, as such, more capable of recognizing God.

403 Once I was in the car, I let my heart have its way, and I, too, cried like a baby, for joy that God was granting our family so many graces, and I became steeped in a prayer of thanksgiving.

By evening I was already in Warsaw. Firstly, I greeted the Lord of the house [Jesus in the Eucharist], and then I went to greet the whole community.

404 When I entered the chapel to say goodnight to the Lord before retiring, and apologized for having talked so little to Him when I was at home, I heard a voice within my soul, **I am very pleased that you had not been talking with Me, but were making My goodness known to souls and rousing them to love Me.**

405 Mother Superior [Mary Joseph] said to me, "We are both going to Jozefinek tomorrow, Sister, and you will have a chance to talk with Mother General [Michael]." I was delighted. Mother General was ever the same, full of goodness, peace and the Spirit of God. I had a long talk with her. We attended the afternoon service. The Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was sung. The Lord Jesus was exposed in the monstrance.

406 After a short while, I saw the little Jesus, who came out from the Host

and rested in my hands. This lasted for a moment; immense joy flooded my soul. The Child Jesus had the same appearance as He had the time we entered the Chapel with Mother Superior — my former Directress, Mary Joseph. The next day I was already back in my beloved Vilnius.

407 Oh, how happy I felt to be back in our convent! I felt as though I was entering the convent for the second time. I took unending delight in the silence and peace in which the soul can so easily immerse itself in God, helped by everyone and disturbed by no one.

(170) The Great Lent

408 When I become immersed in the Lord's Passion, I often see the Lord Jesus, during adoration, in this manner: after the scourging, the torturers took the Lord and stripped Him of His own garment, which had already adhered to the wounds; as they took it off, His wounds reopened; then they threw a dirty and tattered scarlet cloak over the fresh wounds of the Lord. The cloak, in some places, barely reached His knees. They made Him sit on a piece of beam. And then they wove a crown of thorns, which they put on His sacred head. They put a reed in His hand and made fun of Him, bowing to Him as to a king. Some spat in His face, while others took the reed and struck Him on the head with it. Others caused him pain by slapping Him; still others covered His face and struck Him with their fists. Jesus bore all this with meekness. Who can comprehend Him — comprehend His suffering? Jesus' eyes were downcast. I sensed what was happening in the most sweet Heart of Jesus at that time. Let every soul reflect on what Jesus was suffering at that moment. They tried to outdo each other in insulting the Lord. I reflected: Where does such malice in man come from? It is caused by sin. Love and sin have met.

409 When I was attending Mass in a certain church with another sister, I felt the greatness and majesty of God; I felt the church was permeated by God. His majesty enveloped me and, though it terrified me, it filled me with peace and joy. I knew that nothing could oppose His will. Oh, if only all souls knew who is living in our churches, there would not be so many outrages and so much disrespect in these holy places!

410 O eternal and incomprehensible Love, I beg You for one grace: enlighten my mind with light from on high; help me to know and

appreciate all things according to their value. I feel the greatest joy in my soul when I come to know the truth.

411 **(171)** March 21, 1935. Often during Mass, I see the Lord in my soul; I feel His presence which pervades my being. I sense His divine gaze; I have long talks with Him without saying a word; I know what His divine Heart desires, and I always do what will please Him the most. I love Him to distraction, and I feel that I am being loved by God. At those times, when I meet with God deep within myself, I feel so happy that I do not know how to express it. Such moments are short, for the soul could not bear it for long, as separation from the body would be inevitable. Though these moments are very short, their power, however, which is transmitted to the soul, remains with it for a very long time. Without the least effort, I experience the profound recollection which then envelops me — and it does not diminish even if I talk with people, nor does it interfere with the performance of my duties. I feel the constant presence of God without any effort of my soul. I know that I am united with Him as closely as a drop of water is united with the bottomless ocean.

Last Thursday, toward the end of my prayers, I felt this grace, and it lasted for an unusually long time, for it was throughout Mass, so that I thought I would die of joy. At such times, my knowledge of God and His attributes becomes more acute, and also I know my own self and my misery much better. I am amazed at the Lord's great condescension to such a miserable soul as mine. After Holy Mass, I felt completely immersed in God and am still conscious of His every glance into the depth of my heart. About midday, I entered the chapel for a moment, and again the power of grace struck my heart. As I continued in a state of recollection, Satan took a flowerpot and angrily hurled it to the ground with all his might. I saw all his rage and his jealousy.

412 There was no one in the chapel, so I got up, picked up the pieces of the flowerpot, repotted the flower and tried to do all this before anyone came in. But I did not manage to do so, as Mother Superior [Borgia] came in at that moment together with the sister sacristan⁹³ and several other sisters. Mother Superior was surprised that I had been touching something on the altar and **(172)** thus caused the flowerpot to fall. Sister sacristan showed her displeasure, and I did my best not to explain or excuse myself. But

towards evening I felt very exhausted and could not make my Holy Hour, so I asked Mother Superior to allow me to go to bed early. I fell asleep as soon as I lay down, but at about eleven o'clock Satan shook my bed. I awoke instantly, and I started to pray peacefully to my Guardian Angel. Then I saw the souls who were doing penance in purgatory. They appeared like shadows, and among them I saw many demons. One of these tried to vex me; taking the form of a cat, he kept throwing himself onto my bed and on my feet, and he was quite heavy, as if [weighing] a ton.

I kept praying the rosary all the while, and toward dawn these beings vanished, and I was able to get some sleep. When I entered the chapel in the morning I heard a voice in my soul, **You are united to Me; fear nothing. But know, my child, that Satan hates you; he hates every soul, but he burns with a particular hatred for you, because you have snatched so many souls from his dominion.**

Holy Thursday, April 18.

413 This morning I heard these words: **From today until the [celebration of the] Resurrection, you will not feel My presence, but your soul will be filled with great longing.** And immediately a great longing filled my soul; I felt a separation from my beloved Jesus, and when the moment for Holy Communion came, I saw the suffering Face of Jesus in every Host [contained] in the chalice. From that moment, I felt a more intense yearning in my heart.

414 On Good Friday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, when I entered the chapel, I heard these words: **I desire that the image be publicly (173) honored.** Then I saw the Lord Jesus dying on the Cross amidst great suffering, and out of the Heart of Jesus came the same two rays as are in the image.

415 Saturday. During Vespers, I saw the Lord Jesus radiant as the sun, in a bright garment, and He said to me, **May your heart be joyful.** And great joy flooded me, and I was penetrated with God's presence, which for the soul, is a treasure beyond words.

416 When the image was displayed,⁹⁴ I saw a sudden movement of the hand

of Jesus, as He made a large sign of the cross. In the evening of the same day, when I had gone to bed, I saw the image going over the town, and the town was covered with what appeared to be a mesh and nets. As Jesus passed, He cut through all the nets and finally made a large sign of the cross and disappeared. I saw myself surrounded by a multitude of malicious figures burning with hatred for me. Various threats came from their lips, but none of them touched me. After a moment, this apparition vanished, but for a long time I could not get to sleep.

417 [April] 26. On Friday, when I was at Ostra Brama to attend the ceremony during which the image was displayed, I heard a sermon given by my confessor [Father Sopocko]. This sermon about Divine Mercy was the first of the things that Jesus had asked for so very long ago. When he began to speak about the great mercy of the Lord, the image came alive and the rays pierced the hearts of the people gathered there, but not all to the same degree. Some received more, some less. Great joy filled my soul to see the grace of God.

(174) Then I heard the words, You are a witness of My mercy. You shall stand before My throne forever as a living witness to My mercy.

418 When the sermon was over, I did not wait for the end of the service, as I was in a hurry to get back home. When I had taken a few steps, a great multitude of demons blocked my way. They threatened me with terrible tortures, and voices could be heard: “She has snatched away everything we have worked for over so many years!” When I asked them, “Where have you come from in such great numbers?” the wicked forms answered, “Out of human hearts; stop tormenting us!”

419 Seeing their great hatred for me, I immediately asked my Guardian Angel for help, and at once the bright and radiant figure of my Guardian Angel appeared and said to me, “Do not fear, spouse of my Lord; without His permission these spirits will do you no harm.” Immediately the evil spirits vanished, and the faithful Guardian Angel accompanied me, in a visible manner, right to the very house. His look was modest and peaceful, and a flame of fire sparkled from his forehead.

O Jesus, I would like to toil and wear myself out and suffer all my life for that one moment in which I saw Your glory, O Lord, and profit for souls.

Sunday, [April] 28, 1935.

420 Low Sunday; that is, the Feast of The Divine Mercy, the conclusion of the Jubilee of Redemption. When we went to take part in the celebrations, my heart leapt with joy that the two solemnities were so closely united. I asked God for mercy on the souls of sinners. Toward the end of the service, when the priest took the Blessed Sacrament to bless the people, I saw the Lord Jesus as He is represented in the image. The Lord gave His blessing, and the rays extended over the whole world. Suddenly, I saw an impenetrable brightness in the form of a crystal dwelling place, woven together from waves of a brilliance unapproachable (175) to both creatures and spirits. Three doors led to this resplendence. At that moment, Jesus, as He is represented in the image, entered this resplendence through the second door to the Unity within. It is a triple Unity, which is incomprehensible — which is infinity. I heard a voice, **This Feast emerged from the very depths of My mercy, and it is confirmed in the vast depths of My tender mercies. Every soul believing and trusting in My mercy will obtain it.** I was overjoyed at the immense goodness and greatness of my God.

April 29, 1935.

421 On the eve of the exposition of the image, I went with our Mother Superior to visit our confessor [Father Sopocko]. When the conversation touched upon the image, the confessor asked for one of the sisters to help make some wreaths. Mother Superior replied, “Sister Faustina will help.” I was delighted at this, and when we returned home, I immediately set about preparing some greens, and with the help of one of our wards brought them over. Another person, who works at the church, also helped. Everything was ready by seven o’clock that evening, and the image was already hanging in its place. However, some ladies saw me standing around there, for I was more a bother than a help, and on the next day they asked the sisters what this beautiful image was and what was its significance. Surely these sisters would know, [they thought] as one of them had helped adorn it the day before. The sisters were very surprised as they knew nothing about it; they all wanted to see it and immediately they began to suspect me. They said, “Sister Faustina must certainly know all about it.”

When they began asking me, I was silent, since I could not tell the truth. My silence increased their curiosity, and I was even more on my guard not to tell a lie and not to tell the truth, since I had no permission [to do so]. Then they started to show their displeasure and reproached me openly saying, “How is it that **(176)** outsiders know about this and we, nothing?” Various judgments were being made about me. I suffered much for three days, but a special power took over in my soul. I was happy to suffer for God and for the souls that have been granted His mercy during these days. Seeing that so many souls have been granted divine mercy these days, I regard as nothing even the greatest suffering and toil, even if they were to continue till the end of the world; for they will come to an end, while these souls have been saved from torments that are without end. It was a great joy for me to see others returning to the source of happiness, the bosom of The Divine Mercy.

422 Seeing Father Sopocko’s sacrifice and efforts for this work, I admired his patience and humility. This all cost a great deal, not only in terms of toil and various troubles, but also of money; and Father Sopocko was taking care of all the expenses. I can see that Divine Providence had prepared him to carry out this work of mercy before I had asked God for this. Oh, how strange are Your ways, O God! And how happy are the souls that follow the call of divine grace!

423 Praise the Lord, my soul, for everything, and glorify His mercy, for His goodness is without end. Everything will pass, but His mercy is without limit or end. And although evil will attain its measure, in mercy there is no measure.

O my God, even in the punishments You send down upon the earth I see the abyss of Your mercy, for by punishing us here on earth You free us from eternal punishment. Rejoice, all you creatures, for you are closer to God in His infinite mercy than a baby to its mother’s heart. O God, You are compassion itself for the greatest sinners who sincerely repent. The greater the sinner, the greater his right to God’s **(177)** mercy.

A Certain Moment, May 12, 1935

424 In the evening, I just about got into bed, and I fell asleep immediately. Though I fell asleep quickly, I was awakened even more quickly. A little

child came and woke me up. The child seemed about a year old, and I was surprised it could speak so well, as children of that age either do not speak or speak very indistinctly. The child was beautiful beyond words and resembled the Child Jesus, and he said to me, **Look at the sky.** And when I looked at the sky I saw the stars and the moon shining. Then the child asked me, **Do you see this moon and these stars?** When I said yes, he spoke these words to me, **These stars are the souls of faithful Christians, and the moon is the souls of religious. Do you see how great the difference is between the light of the moon and the light of the stars? Such is the difference in heaven between the soul of a religious and the soul of a faithful Christian.** And he went on to say that, **True greatness is in loving God and in humility.**

425 Then I saw a soul which was being separated from its body amid great torment. O Jesus, as I am about to write this, I tremble at the sight of the horrible things that bear witness against him.... I saw the souls of little children and those of older ones, about nine years of age, emerging from some kind of a muddy abyss. The souls were foul and disgusting, resembling the most terrible monsters and decaying corpses. But the corpses were living and gave loud testimony against the dying soul. And the soul I saw dying was a soul full of the world's applause and honors, the end of which are emptiness and sin. Finally a woman came out who was holding something like tears in her apron, and she witnessed very strongly against him.

426 O terrible hour, **(178)** at which one is obliged to see all one's deeds in their nakedness and misery; not one of them is lost, they will all accompany us to God's judgment. I can find no words or comparisons to express such terrible things. And although it seems to me that this soul is not damned, nevertheless its torments are in no way different from the torments of hell; there is only this difference: that they will someday come to an end.

427 A moment later, I again saw the child who had awakened me. It was of wondrous beauty and repeated these words to me, **True greatness of the soul is in loving God and in humility.** I asked the child, "How do you know that true greatness of the soul is in loving God and in humility? Only theologians know about such things and you haven't even learned

the catechism. So how do you know?" To this He answered, **I know; I know all things.** And with that, He disappeared.

428 But I could no longer get to sleep; my mind became exhausted by thinking about the things I had seen. O human souls, how late you learn the truth! O abyss of God's mercy, pour yourself out as quickly as possible over the whole world, according to what You Yourself have said.

May, 1935. A Certain Moment.

429 When I became aware of God's great plans for me, I was frightened at their greatness and felt myself quite incapable of fulfilling them, and I began to avoid interior conversations with Him, filling up the time with vocal prayer. I did this out of humility, but I soon recognized it was not true humility, but rather a great temptation from the devil. When, on one occasion, instead of interior prayer, I took up a book of spiritual reading, I heard these words spoken distinctly and forcefully within my soul, **You will prepare the world for My final coming.** These words moved me deeply, and although I pretended (179) not to hear them, I understood them very well and had no doubt about them. Once, being tired out from this battle of love with God, and making constant excuses on the grounds that I was unable to carry out this task, I wanted to leave the chapel, but some force held me back and I found myself powerless. Then I heard these words, **You intend to leave the chapel, but you shall not get away from Me, for I am everywhere. You cannot do anything of yourself, but with Me you can do all things.**

430 When, in the course of the week, I went to see my confessor [Father Sopocko], and revealed the condition of my soul to him, especially the fact that I was avoiding interior conversation with God, I was told that I must not shrink from interior conversation with God, but should listen intently to the words He speaks to me.

431 I followed my confessor's advice, and at the first meeting with the Lord, I fell at Jesus' feet and, with a grief-stricken heart, apologized for everything. Then Jesus lifted me up from the ground and sat me beside Him and let me put my head on His breast, so that I could better understand and feel the desires of His most sweet Heart. Then He spoke

these words to me, **My daughter, have fear of nothing; I am always with you. All your adversaries will harm you only to the degree that I permit them to do so. You are my dwelling place and my constant repose. For your sake I will withhold the hand which punishes; for your sake I bless the earth.**

432 At that very moment, I felt some kind of fire in my heart. I feel my senses deadening and have no idea of what is going on around me. I feel the Lord's gaze piercing me through and through. I am very much aware of His greatness and my misery. An extraordinary suffering pervades my soul, together with a joy I cannot compare to anything. I feel powerless in the embrace of God. I feel that I am in Him and that I am dissolved in Him like a drop of water in the ocean. I cannot express what takes place within me; after such interior prayer, I feel strength and power to practice the most difficult virtues. I feel dislike for all things that the world holds in esteem. With all my soul I desire silence and solitude.

433 **(180)** May, 1935. During a Forty Hours Devotion I saw the face of the Lord Jesus in the Sacred Host which was exposed in the monstrance. Jesus was looking with kindness at everyone.

434 I often see the Child Jesus during Holy Mass. He is extremely beautiful. He appears to be about one year old. Once, when I saw the same Child during Mass in our chapel, I was seized with a violent desire and an irresistible longing to approach the altar and take the Child Jesus. At that moment, the Child Jesus was standing by me on the side of my kneeler, and He leaned with His two little hands against my shoulder, gracious and joyful, His look deep and penetrating. But when the priest broke the Host, Jesus was once again on the altar, and was broken and consumed by the priest.

After Holy Communion, I saw Jesus in the same way in my heart and felt Him physically in my heart throughout the day. Unconsciously, a most profound recollection took possession of me, and I did not exchange a word with anyone. I avoided people as much as I could, always answering questions regarding my duties, but beyond that, not a word.

June 9, 1935. Pentecost.

435 As I was walking in the garden in the evening, I heard these words: **By your entreaties, you and your companions shall obtain mercy for yourselves and for the world.** I understood that I would not remain in the Congregation in which I am at the present time.⁹⁵ I saw clearly that God's will regarding me was otherwise. But I kept making excuses before God, telling Him that I was unable to carry out this task. "Jesus, You know very well what I am" [I said], and I started enumerating my weaknesses to the Lord, hiding behind them so that He would agree that I was unable to carry out **(181)** His plans. Then I heard these words: **Do not fear; I Myself will make up for everything that is lacking in you.** But these words penetrated me to my depths and made me even more aware of my misery, and I understood that the word of the Lord is living and that it penetrates to the very depths. I understood that God demands a more perfect way of life of me. However, I kept using my incompetence as an excuse.

436 June 29, 1935. When I talked to my spiritual director [Father Sopocko] about various things that the Lord was asking of me, I thought he would tell me that I was incapable of accomplishing all those things, and that the Lord Jesus did not use miserable souls like me for the works He wanted done. But I heard words [to the effect] that it was just such souls that God chooses most frequently to carry out His plans. This priest is surely guided by the Spirit of God; he has penetrated the secrets of my soul, the deepest secrets which were between me and God, about which I had not yet spoken to him, because I had not understood them myself, and the Lord had not clearly ordered me to tell him. The secret is this: God demands that there be a Congregation which will proclaim the mercy of God to the world and, by its prayers, obtain it for the world. When the priest asked me if I had not had any such inspirations, I replied that I had not had any clear orders; but at that instant a light penetrated my soul, and I understood that the Lord was speaking through him.

437 In vain had I defended myself by saying I had not received any clear orders, for at the end of our conversation I saw the Lord Jesus on the threshold, as He is represented in the image, and He said to me, **I desire that there be such a Congregation.**⁹⁶ This lasted only a moment. **(182)** Yet I did not tell him about it right away, as I was in a hurry to get back home, and I kept repeating to the Lord, "I am unable to carry out Your

plans, O Lord!” But, strangely enough, Jesus paid no attention to my appeals, but gave me to see and understand how pleasing this work was to Him. He took no account of my weakness, but gave me to know how many difficulties I must overcome. And I, His poor creature, could say nothing but “I am incapable of it, O my God!”

438 June 30, 1935. At the very beginning of Holy Mass on the following day, I saw Jesus in all His unspeakable beauty. He said to me that He desired that **such a Congregation be founded as soon as possible, and you shall live in it together with your companions. My Spirit shall be the rule of your life. Your life is to be modeled on Mine, from the crib to My death on the Cross. Penetrate My mysteries, and you will know the abyss of My mercy towards creatures and My unfathomable goodness — and this you shall make known to the world. Through your prayers, you shall mediate between heaven and earth.**

439 Then came the moment to receive Holy Communion, and Jesus disappeared, and I saw a great brightness. Then I heard these words: **We give Our blessing**, and at that moment a bright ray issued from that light and pierced my heart; an extraordinary fire was enkindled in my soul — I thought I would die of joy and happiness. I felt the separation of my spirit from my body. I felt totally immersed in God. I felt I was snatched up by the Almighty, like a particle of dust, into unknown expanses.

Trembling with joy in the embrace of the Creator, I felt He Himself was supporting me so that I could bear this great happiness and gaze at His Majesty. I know now that, if He Himself had not **(183)** first strengthened me by His grace, my soul would not have been able to bear the happiness, and I would have died in an instant. Holy Mass came to an end I know not when, for it was beyond my power to pay attention to what was going on in the chapel. But when I recovered my senses, I felt the strength and courage to do God’s will; nothing seemed difficult to me; and whereas I had previously been making excuses to the Lord, I now felt the Lord’s courage and strength within me, and I said to the Lord, “I am ready for every beck and call of Your will!” Interiorly, I had gone through everything that I was going to experience in the future.

440 O my Creator and Lord, my entire being is Yours! Dispose of me

according to Your divine pleasure and according to Your eternal plans and Your unfathomable mercy. May every soul know how good the Lord is; may no soul fear to commune intimately with the Lord; may no soul use unworthiness as an excuse, and may it never postpone [accepting] God's invitations, for that is not pleasing to the Lord. There is no soul more wretched than I am, as I truly know myself, and I am astounded that divine Majesty stoops so low. O eternity, it seems to me that you are too short to extol [adequately] the infinite mercy of the Lord!

441 Once, the image was being exhibited over the altar during the Corpus Christi procession [June 20, 1935]. When the priest exposed the Blessed Sacrament, and the choir began to sing, the rays from the image pierced the Sacred Host and spread out all over the world. Then I heard these words: **These rays of mercy will pass through you, just as they have passed through this Host, and they will go out (184) through all the world.** At these words, profound joy invaded my soul.

442 Once when my confessor [Father Sopocko] was saying Mass, I saw, as usual, the Child Jesus on the altar, from the time of the Offertory. However, a moment before the Elevation, the priest vanished from my sight, and Jesus alone remained. When the moment of the Elevation approached, Jesus took the Host and the chalice in His little hands and raised them together, looking up to heaven, and a moment later I again saw my confessor. I asked the Child Jesus where the priest had been during the time I had not seen him. Jesus answered, **In My Heart.** But I could not understand anything more of these words of Jesus.

443 On one occasion I heard these words, **I desire that you live according to My will, in the most secret depths of your soul.** I reflected on these words, which spoke very much to my heart. This was on the day of confessions for the community. When I went to confession and had accused myself of my sins, the priest [Father Sopocko] repeated to me the same words that the Lord had previously spoken.

444 The priest spoke these profound words to me, "There are three degrees in the accomplishment of God's will: in the first, the soul carries out all rules and statutes pertaining to external observance; in the second degree, the soul accepts interior inspirations and carries them out faithfully; in the third degree, the soul, abandoned to the will of God, allows Him to

dispose of it freely, and God does with it as, He pleases, and it is a docile tool in His hands.” And the priest said that I was at the second degree in the accomplishment of God’s will and that I had not yet reached the **(185)** third degree, but that I should strive to attain it. These words pierced my soul. I see clearly that God often gives the priest knowledge of what is going on in the depths of my soul. This does not surprise me at all; indeed, I thank God that He has such chosen persons.

Thursday, Nocturnal Adoration.

445 When I came for adoration, an inner recollection took hold of me immediately, and I saw the Lord Jesus tied to a pillar, stripped of His clothes, and the scourging began immediately. I saw four men who took turns at striking the Lord with scourges. My heart almost stopped at the sight of these tortures. The Lord said to me, **I suffer even greater pain than that which you see.** And Jesus gave me to know for what sins He subjected Himself to the scourging: these are sins of impurity. Oh, how dreadful was Jesus’ moral suffering during the scourging! Then Jesus said to me, **Look and see the human race in its present condition.** In an instant, I saw horrible things: the executioners left Jesus, and other people started scourging Him; they seized the scourges and struck the Lord mercilessly. These were priests, religious men and women, and high dignitaries of the Church, which surprised me greatly. There were lay people of all ages and walks of life. All vented their malice on the innocent Jesus. Seeing this, my heart fell as if into a mortal agony. And while the executioners had been scourging Him, Jesus had been silent and looking into the distance; but when those other souls I mentioned scourged Him, Jesus closed His eyes, and a soft but most painful moan escaped from His Heart. And Jesus gave me to know in detail the gravity of the malice of these ungrateful souls: **You see, this is a torture greater than My death.** Then my lips too fell silent, and I began to experience **(186)** the agony of death, and I felt that no one would comfort me or snatch me from that state but the One who had put me into it. Then the Lord said to me, **I see the sincere pain of your heart which brought great solace to My Heart. See and take comfort.**

446 Then I saw the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross. When He had hung on it for a while, I saw a multitude of souls crucified like Him. Then I saw a

second multitude of souls, and a third. The second multitude were not nailed to [their] crosses, but were holding them firmly in their hands. The third were neither nailed to [their] crosses nor holding them firmly in their hands, but were dragging [their] crosses behind them and were discontent. Jesus then said to me, **Do you see these souls? Those who are like Me in the pain and contempt they suffer will be like Me also in glory. And those who resemble Me less in pain and contempt will also bear less resemblance to Me in glory.**

Among the crucified souls, the most numerous were those of the clergy. I also saw some crucified souls whom I knew, and this gave me great joy. Then Jesus said to me, **In your meditation tomorrow, you shall think about what you have seen today.** And immediately Jesus disappeared on me.

447 Friday. I was ill and could not attend Holy Mass. At seven o'clock in the morning I saw my confessor celebrating Holy Mass, during which I saw the Child Jesus. Toward the end of Mass, the vision disappeared, and I found myself back in my cell as before. Indescribable joy took hold of me because, although I could not go to Mass in our own chapel, I had assisted at it in a church which was far distant. Jesus has a remedy for everything.

(187) July 30, 1935.

448 Feast of St. Ignatius. I prayed fervently to this Saint, reproaching him for looking on and not coming to my aid in such important matters as doing the will of God. I said to him, "You, our Patron, who were inflamed with the fire of love and zeal for the greater glory of God, I humbly beg you to help me to carry out God's designs."⁹⁷ This was during Holy Mass. Then I saw Saint Ignatius at the left side of the altar, with a large book in his hand. And he spoke these words to me, "My daughter, I am not indifferent to your cause. This rule can be adapted, and it can be adapted to this Congregation." And gesturing with his hand toward the big book, he disappeared. I rejoiced greatly at the fact of how much the saints think of us and of how closely we are united with them. Oh, the goodness of God! How beautiful is the spiritual world, that already here on earth we commune with the saints! All day long, I could feel the presence of this dear Patron Saint.

August 5, 1935. The Feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

449 I prepared for this feast with greater zeal than in previous years. On the morning of the feast itself, I experienced an inner struggle at the thought that I must leave this Congregation which enjoys such special protection from Mary. This struggle lasted through the meditation and through the first Mass as well. During the second Mass, I turned to our Holy Mother, telling Her that it was difficult for me to separate myself from this Congregation... “which is under Your special protection, O Mary.” Then I saw the Blessed Virgin, unspeakably beautiful. She came down from the altar to my kneeler, held me close to herself and said to me, *I am Mother to you all, thanks to the unfathomable mercy of God. Most pleasing to Me is that soul which faithfully carries out the will of God.* She gave me to understand that I had faithfully fulfilled the will **(188)** of God and had thus found favor in His eyes. *Be courageous. Do not fear apparent obstacles, but fix your gaze upon the Passion of My Son, and in this way you will be victorious.*

Nocturnal Adoration.

450 I was suffering very much, and it seemed to me I would not be able to make my adoration, but I gathered up all my will power and, although I collapsed in my cell, I paid no attention to what ailed me, for I had the Passion of Jesus before my eyes. When I entered the chapel, I received an inner understanding of the great reward that God is preparing for us, not only for our good deeds, but also for our sincere desire to perform them. What a great grace of God this is!

Oh, how sweet it is to toil for God and souls! I want no respite in this battle, but I shall fight to the last breath for the glory of my King and Lord. I shall not lay the sword aside until He calls me before His throne; I fear no blows, because God is my shield. It is the enemy who should fear us, and not we him. Satan defeats only the proud and the cowardly, because the humble are strong. Nothing will confuse or frighten a humble soul. I have directed my flight at the very center of the sun's heat, and nothing can lower its course. Love will not allow itself to be taken prisoner; it is free like a queen. Love attains God.

451 Once after Holy Communion, I heard these words: **You are Our**

dwelling place. At that moment, I felt in my soul the presence of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I felt that I was the temple of God. I felt I was a child of the Father. I cannot explain all this, but the spirit understands it well. O Infinite Goodness, how low You stoop to Your miserable creature!

452 If only souls would become recollected, God would speak to them at once, for dissipation drowns out the word of the Lord.

453 **(189)** On one occasion, the Lord said to me, **Why are you fearful and why do you tremble when you are united to Me? I am displeased when a soul yields to vain terrors. Who will dare to touch you when you are with Me? Most dear to Me is the soul that strongly believes in My goodness and has complete trust in Me. I heap My confidence upon it and give it all it asks.**

454 Once, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, take the graces that others spurn; take as many as you can carry.** At that moment, my soul was inundated with the love of God. I feel that I am united with the Lord so closely that I cannot find words to express that union; in this state I suddenly feel that all the things God has, all the goods and treasures, are mine, although I set little store by them, for He alone is enough for me. In Him I see my everything; without Him — nothing.

I look for no happiness beyond my own interior where God dwells. I rejoice that God dwells within me; here I abide with Him unendingly; it is here that my greatest intimacy with Him exists; here I dwell with Him in safety; here is a place not probed by the human eye. The Blessed Virgin encourages me to commune with God in this way.

455 When some suffering afflicts me, it no longer causes me any bitterness, nor do great consolations carry me away. I am filled with the peace and equanimity that flow from the knowledge of the truth.

How can living surrounded by unfriendly hearts do me any harm when I enjoy full happiness within my soul? Or, how can having kind hearts around me help me when I do not have God within me? When God dwells within me, who can harm me?

(190) J.M.J. Vilnius, August 12, 1935

Three-day Retreat.

456 On the evening of the introductory day of the retreat, as I listened to the points for the meditation, I heard these words: **During this retreat I will speak to you through the mouth of this priest to strengthen you and assure you of the truth of the words which I address to you in the depths of your soul. Although this is a retreat for all the sisters, I have you especially in mind, as I want to strengthen you and make you fearless in the midst of all the adversities which lie ahead. Therefore, listen intently to his words and meditate upon them in the depths of your soul.**

457 Oh, how astonished I was, for everything the Father said about union with God and the obstacles to this union I had experienced literally in my soul and heard from Jesus, who speaks to me in the depths of my soul. Perfection consists in this close union with God.

458 During the ten-o'clock meditation, Father [Rzyczkowski⁹⁸] spoke about divine mercy and about God's goodness to us. He said that as we review the history of mankind, we can see this great goodness of God at every step. All the attributes of God, such as omnipotence and wisdom, serve to reveal to us the greatest of His attributes; namely, His goodness. God's goodness is the greatest of God's attributes. Many souls striving for perfection, however, are not aware of this great goodness of God. Everything that Father said in the course of the meditation about the goodness of God, was exactly what Jesus had said to me concerning **(191)** the Feast of Mercy. I have now come to understand clearly what the Lord has promised me, and I have no doubt about anything; God's language is clear and distinct.

459 Throughout that entire meditation I saw the Lord Jesus on the altar, in a white garment, His hand holding the notebook in which I write these things. Throughout the entire meditation Jesus kept turning the pages of the notebook and remained silent; however, my heart could not bear the fire that was enkindled in my soul. Despite the great effort of my will to take control of myself and not let others see what was going on in my soul, toward the end of the meditation I felt that I was completely beyond

my own control. Then Jesus said to me, **You have not written everything in the notebook about My goodness towards humankind; I desire that you omit nothing; I desire that your heart be firmly grounded in total peace.**

460 O Jesus, my heart stops beating when I think of all You are doing for me! I am amazed at You, Lord, that You would stoop so low to my wretched soul! What inconceivable means You take to convince me!

461 This is the first time in my life that I have made such a retreat. I understand in a special and clear way every single word that Father speaks, for I have first experienced it all in my soul. I now see that Jesus will not leave in doubt any soul that loves Him sincerely. Jesus wants the soul that is in close communion with Him to be filled with peace, despite sufferings and adversities.

462 Now I understand well that what unites our soul most closely to God is self-denial; that is, joining our will to the will of God. This is what makes the soul truly free, contributes to profound recollection of the spirit, and makes all life's burdens light, and death sweet.

463 **(192)** Jesus told me that if I should have any doubts regarding the feast or the founding of the Congregation, — **or regarding anything else about which I have spoken in the depths of your soul, I will reply immediately through the mouth of this priest.**

464 During a meditation on humility, an old doubt returned: that a soul as miserable as mine could not carry out the task which the Lord was demanding [of me]. Just as I was analyzing this doubt, the priest who was conducting the retreat interrupted his train of thought and spoke about the very thing I was having doubts about; namely, that God usually chooses the weakest and simplest souls as tools for His greatest works; that we can see that this is an undeniable truth when we look at the men He chose to be His apostles; or again, when we look at the history of the Church and see what great works were done by souls that were the least capable of accomplishing them; for it is just in this way that God's works are revealed for what they are, the works of God. When my doubt had completely disappeared, the priest resumed his conference on humility.

Jesus was standing, as He usually did during each conference, on the altar and said nothing to me, but with His kindly gaze pierced my poor soul which no longer had any excuse.

465 Jesus, my Life, how well I feel that You are transforming me into Yourself, in the secrecy of my soul where the senses can no longer perceive much. O my Savior, conceal me completely in the depths of Your Heart and shield me with Your rays against everything that is not You. I beg You, Jesus, let the two rays that have issued from Your most merciful Heart continuously nourish my soul.

466 **(193)** Time of Confession.

My confessor [Father Sopocko] asked me if at that moment Jesus was there and if I could see Him. “Yes, He is here, and I can see Him.” He then told me to ask Jesus about certain persons. Jesus did not answer me, but looked at him. However, after the confession, when I was reciting my penance, Jesus spoke these words to me: **Go and console him on my behalf.** Not understanding the meaning of these words, I immediately repeated to him what Jesus had told me to do.

467 Throughout the whole retreat, I was in uninterrupted communion with Jesus and entered into an intimate relationship with Him with all the might of my heart.

468 The day of the renewal of vows. At the beginning of Holy Mass, I saw Jesus in the usual way. He blessed us and then entered the tabernacle. Then I saw the Mother of God in a white garment and blue mantle, with Her head uncovered. She approached me from the altar, touched me with Her hands and covered me with Her mantle, saying, *Offer these vows for Poland. Pray for her.* This was on August fifteen.

469 On the evening of that same day, I felt in my soul a great yearning for God. I do not see Him at this moment with my bodily eyes as I have on other occasions, but I sense His presence and yet do not grasp Him [with my mind]. This causes me great yearning and torment beyond words. I am dying from the desire to possess Him, to be drowned in Him forever. My spirit pursues Him with all its might; there is nothing in the world that could comfort me. O Love Eternal, now I understand in what close

intimacy my heart was with You! For what else can satisfy me in heaven or on earth except You, O my God, in Whom my soul is drowned.

470 **(194)** One evening, as I looked up from my cell to the sky and saw the beautiful star-strewn firmament and the moon, an inconceivable fire of love for my Creator welled up within my soul and, unable to bear the yearning for Him that arose within my soul, I fell on my face, humbling myself in the dust. I glorified Him for all His works and, when my heart could no longer bear what was going on within it, I wept aloud. Then my Guardian Angel touched me and spoke to me these words: “The Lord orders me to tell you to rise from the ground.” I did so immediately, but felt no consolation in my soul. The yearning for God grew even stronger in me.

471 One day, when I was at adoration, and my spirit seemed to be dying for Him, and I could no longer hold back my tears, I saw a spirit of great beauty who spoke these words to me: “Don’t cry — says the Lord.” After a moment I asked, “Who are you?” He answered me, “I am one of the seven spirits who stand before the throne of God day and night and give Him ceaseless praise.” Yet this spirit did not soothe my yearning, but roused me to even greater longing for God. This spirit is very beautiful, and his beauty comes from close union with God. This spirit does not leave me for a single moment, but accompanies me everywhere.

On the following day during Holy Mass, before the Elevation, this spirit began to sing these words: “Holy, Holy, Holy.” His voice was like that of a thousand voices; it is impossible to put it into words. Suddenly, my spirit was united with God, and in that instant I saw the grandeur and the inconceivable holiness of God and, at the same time, I realized **(195)** the nothingness I am of myself.

472 I knew, more distinctly, than ever before, the Three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But their being, their equality, and their majesty are one. My soul is in communion with these Three; but I do not know how to express this in words; yet, my soul understands it well. Whoever is united to One of the Three Persons is thereby united to the whole Blessed Trinity, for this Oneness is indivisible. This vision, or rather, this knowledge filled my soul with unimaginable happiness, because God is so great. What I am describing I did not see with my eyes,

as on previous occasions, but in a purely interior manner, in a purely spiritual way, independent of the senses. This continued until the end of Holy Mass.

This now happens often to me, and not only in the chapel, but also at work and at times when I least expect it.

473 When our confessor [Father Sopoćko] was away, I confessed to the Archbishop [Romuald Jalbrzykowski⁹⁹]. When I revealed my soul to him, I received this reply: “My daughter, arm yourself with great patience; if these things come from God, they will be realized sooner or later. So be completely at peace. I understand you very well in this matter, my daughter. And now, as regards your leaving the Congregation and thinking of another one, do not entertain such thoughts, for this would be a serious interior temptation.” After this confession, I said to the Lord Jesus, “Why do You command me to do such things and yet do not make it possible to accomplish them?” Then I saw the Lord Jesus after Holy Communion in the same little chapel where I had gone to confession, in the same way in which He is represented in the image. The Lord said to me, **Do not be sad. I will give him to understand the things I am asking of you.** When we were leaving, (196) the Archbishop was very busy, but he told us to return and wait a bit. When we entered the chapel again, I heard these words in my soul: **Tell him what you have seen in this chapel.** At that very moment the Archbishop came in and asked if we did not have something to tell him. But although I had been commanded to tell him, I could not do so because I was in the company of one of the sisters.

One more word from the Holy Confession: “To entreat mercy for the world is a great and beautiful idea. Pray much, Sister, pray for mercy upon sinners, but do it in your own convent.”

The following day, Friday, September 13, 1935.

474 In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw an Angel, the executor of divine wrath. He was clothed in a dazzling robe, his face gloriously bright, a cloud beneath his feet. From the cloud, bolts of thunder and flashes of lightning were springing into his hands; and from his hand they were going forth, and only then were they striking the earth. When I saw

this sign of divine wrath which was about to strike the earth, and in particular a certain place, which for good reasons I cannot name, I began to implore the Angel to hold off for a few moments, and the world would do penance. But my plea was a mere nothing in the face of the divine anger. Just then I saw the Most Holy Trinity. The greatness of Its majesty pierced me deeply, and I did not dare to repeat my entreaties. At that very moment I felt in my soul the power of Jesus' grace, which dwells in my soul. When I became conscious of this grace, I was instantly snatched up before the Throne of God. Oh, how great is our Lord and God and how incomprehensible His holiness! I will make no attempt to describe this greatness, because before long we shall all see Him as He is. I found myself pleading with (197) God for the world with words heard interiorly.

As I was praying in this manner, I saw the Angel's helplessness: he could not carry out the just punishment which was rightly due for sins. Never before had I prayed with such inner power as I did then.

475 The words with which I entreated God are these: **Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ for our sins and those of the whole world; for the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us.**

476 The next morning, when I entered chapel, I heard these words interiorly: **Every time you enter the chapel, immediately recite the prayer which I taught you yesterday.** When I had said the prayer, in my soul I heard these words: **This prayer will serve to appease My wrath. You will recite it for nine days, on the beads of the rosary, in the following manner: First of all, you will say one OUR FATHER and HAIL MARY and the I BELIEVE IN GOD. Then on the OUR FATHER beads you will say the following words: "Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world." On the HAIL MARY beads you will say the following words: "For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world." In conclusion, three times you will recite these words: "Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have**

mercy on us and on the whole world.”¹⁰⁰

477 Silence is a sword in the spiritual struggle. A talkative soul will never attain sanctity. The sword of silence will cut off everything that would like to cling to the soul. We are sensitive to words and quickly want to answer back, without taking any regard as to whether it is God’s will that we should speak. A silent soul is strong; no adversities will harm it if it perseveres in silence. The silent **(198)** soul is capable of attaining the closest union with God. It lives almost always under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God works in a silent soul without hindrance.

478 O my Jesus, You know, You alone know well that my heart knows no other love but You! All my virginal love is drowned eternally in You, O Jesus! I sense keenly how Your divine Blood is circulating in my heart; I have not the least doubt that Your most pure love has entered my heart with Your most sacred Blood. I am aware that You are dwelling in me, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, or rather I am aware that it is I who am living in You, O incomprehensible God! I am aware that I am dissolving in You like a drop in an ocean. I am aware that You are within me and all about me, that You are in all things that surround me, in all that happens to me. O my God, I have come to know You within my heart, and I have loved You above all things that exist on earth or in heaven. Our hearts have a mutual understanding, and no one of humankind will comprehend this.

479 My second confession to the Archbishop [Jalbrzykowski]. “Know, my daughter, that if this is the will of God, it will take place sooner or later, for God’s will must be done. Love God in your heart, have...” [unfinished thought].

480 September 29. The Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel. I have become interiorly united with God. His presence penetrates me to my very depths and fills me with peace, joy and amazement. After such moments of prayer, I am filled with strength and an extraordinary courage to suffer and struggle. Nothing terrifies me, even if the whole world should turn against me. All adversities touch only the surface, but they have no entry **(199)** to the depths, because God, who strengthens me, who fills me, dwells there. All the snares of the enemy are crushed at His footstool. During these moments of union, God sustains me with His might. His

might passes on to me and makes me capable of loving Him. A soul never reaches this state by its own efforts. At the beginning of this interior grace, I was filled with fright, and I started to give in to it; but very quickly, the Lord let me know how much this displeases Him. But it is also He, Himself, who set my fears at rest.

481 Almost every feast of the Church gives me a deeper knowledge of God and a special grace. That is why I prepare myself for each feast and unite myself closely with the spirit of the Church. What a joy it is to be a faithful child of the Church! Oh, how much I love Holy Church and all those who live in it! I look upon them as living members of Christ, who is their Head. I burn with love with those who love; I suffer with those who suffer. I am consumed with sorrow at the sight of those who are cold and ungrateful; and I then try to have such a love for God that it will make amends for those who do not love Him, those who feed their Savior with ingratitude at its worst.

482 O my God, I am conscious of my mission in the Holy Church. It is my constant endeavor to plead for mercy for the world. I unite myself closely with Jesus and stand before Him as an atoning sacrifice on behalf of the world. God will refuse me nothing when I entreat Him with the voice of His Son. My sacrifice is nothing in itself, but when I join it to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it becomes all-powerful and has the power to appease divine wrath. God loves us in His Son; the painful Passion of the Son of God constantly turns aside the wrath of God.

483 **(200)** O God, how I desire that souls come to know You and to see that You have created them because of Your unfathomable love. O my Creator and Lord, I feel that I am going to remove the veil of heaven so that earth will not doubt Your goodness.

Make of me, Jesus, a pure and agreeable offering before the Face of Your Father. Jesus, transform me, miserable and sinful as I am, into Your own self (for You can do all things), and give me to Your Eternal Father. I want to become a sacrificial host before You, but an ordinary wafer to people. I want the fragrance of my sacrifice to be known to You alone. O Eternal God, an unquenchable fire of supplication for Your mercy burns within me. I know and understand that this is my task, here and in eternity. You Yourself have told me to speak about this great mercy and

about Your goodness.

484 On a certain occasion, I understood how very displeased God is with an act, however commendable, that does not bear the stamp of a pure intention. Such deeds incite God to punishment rather than to reward. May such deeds be as few as possible in our lives; indeed, in religious life, there should be none at all.

485 I accept joy or suffering, praise or humiliation with the same disposition. I remember that one and the other are passing. What does it matter to me what people say about me? I have long ago given up everything that concerns my person. My name is host — or sacrifice, not in words but in deeds, in the emptying of myself and in becoming like You on the Cross, O Good Jesus, my Master!

486 **(201)** Jesus, when You come to me in Holy Communion, You who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, have deigned to dwell in the little heaven of my heart, I try to keep You company throughout the day, I do not leave You alone for even a moment. Although I am in the company of other people or with our wards, my heart is always united to Him. When I am asleep I offer Him every beat of my heart; when I awaken I immerse myself in Him without saying a word. When I awaken I adore the Holy Trinity for a short while and thank God for having deigned to give me yet another day, that the mystery of the incarnation of His Son may once more be repeated in me, and that once again His sorrowful Passion may unfold before my eyes. I then try to make it easier for Jesus to pass through me to other souls. I go everywhere with Jesus; His presence accompanies me everywhere.

487 In the sufferings of soul or body, I try to keep silence, for then my spirit gains the strength that flows from the Passion of Jesus. I have ever before my eyes His sorrowful Face, abused and disfigured, His divine Heart pierced by our sins and especially by the ingratitude of chosen souls.

488 Twice I was exhorted to make myself ready for sufferings awaiting me in Warsaw. The first warning was given interiorly by a voice I heard, and the second took place during Holy Mass. Before the elevation, I saw the Lord Jesus on the Cross and He said to me, **Prepare yourself for sufferings**. I thanked the Lord for the grace of this warning and said to

Him, “I am certainly not going to suffer more than You, my Savior.” However, I took this to heart and kept strengthening myself through prayer and little sufferings so that I would be able to endure it when the greater ones come.

(202) October 19, 1935.

Trip from Vilnius to Cracow for an Eight-day Retreat.

489 On Friday evening during the rosary, when I was thinking about tomorrow’s journey and about the importance of the matter which I was to present to Father Andrasz,¹⁰¹ fear seized me at the sight of my misery and incapability, and of the greatness of God’s work. Crushed by this suffering, I submitted myself to the will of God. At that moment, I saw Jesus, in a bright garment, near my kneeler. He said, **Why are you afraid to do My will? Will I not help you as I have done thus far? Repeat every one of My demands to those who represent Me on earth, but do only what they tell you to do.** At that, a certain strength entered my soul.

490 The next morning, I saw my Guardian Angel, who accompanied me throughout the journey as far as Warsaw. He disappeared when we entered the convent gate. Just as we were passing the little chapel on the way to greet the superiors, God’s presence took hold of me, and the Lord filled me with the fire of His love. At such moments, I always have a better understanding of the greatness of His majesty.

When we took our seats on the train from Warsaw to Cracow, I once again saw my Guardian Angel at my side. He was absorbed in prayer and in contemplating God, and I followed him with my thoughts. When we arrived at the convent entrance, he disappeared.

491 When I entered the chapel, once again the majesty of God overwhelmed me. I felt that I was immersed in God, totally immersed in Him and penetrated by Him, being aware of how much the heavenly Father loves us. Oh, what great happiness fills my heart from knowing God and the divine life! It is my desire to share this happiness with all people. I cannot keep this happiness locked in my own heart alone, for His flames burn Me and cause my bosom and my entrails to burst asunder. I desire to go throughout the whole world and speak to souls about the great mercy of

God. Priests, help me in this; use the strongest words [at your disposal] to proclaim His mercy, for every word falls short of how merciful He really is.

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(203) J.M.J. Cracow, October 20, 1935.

Eight-day Retreat.

492 Eternal God, Goodness itself, whose mercy is incomprehensible to every intellect, whether human or angelic, help me, your feeble child, to do Your holy will as You make it known to me. I desire nothing but to fulfill God's desires. Lord, here are my soul and my body, my mind and my will, my heart and all my love. Rule me according to Your eternal plans.

493 After Holy Communion, my soul was again flooded with God's love. I rejoiced in His greatness. Here I see distinctly His will, which I am to carry out, and at the same time my own weakness and misery; I see how I can do nothing without His help.

Second Day of Retreat.

494 When I was about to go to the parlor to see Father Andrasz, I felt frightened because the secret is binding only in the confessional. This was a groundless fear. One word from Mother Superior set me at ease about it. Meanwhile, when I entered the chapel, I heard these words in my soul: **I want you to be open and simple as a child with My representative just as you are with Me; otherwise I will leave you and will not commune with you.**

Truly, God gave me the great grace of complete confidence, and after the conversation, God granted me the grace of deep peace and light concerning these matters.

495 Jesus, Eternal Light, enlighten my mind, strengthen my will, inflame my heart and be with me as You have promised, for without You I am nothing. You know, Jesus, how weak I am. I do not need to tell You this, for You Yourself know perfectly well how wretched I am. It is in You that all my strength lies.

496 **(204)** Confession Day.

From early morning, the turmoil in my soul was more violent than anything I had ever experienced before. Complete abandonment by God; I felt the utter weakness that I was. Thoughts bore in upon me: why should I leave this convent where I am loved by the sisters and superiors, where life is so tranquil; [where I am] bound by perpetual vows and carry out my duties without difficulty; why should I listen to the voice of my conscience; why follow an inspiration coming from who knows where; wouldn't it be better to carry on like all the other sisters? Perhaps the Lord's words could be stifled, not taken heed of; maybe God will not demand an account of them on the Day of Judgment. Where will this inner voice lead me? If I follow it, what tremendous difficulties, tribulations, and adversities are in store for me. I fear the future, and I am agonizing in the present.

This suffering continued with the same intensity throughout the whole day. When, in the evening, my turn came for confession, I could not make a full confession, even though I had been preparing for a long time. I received absolution and left, not knowing what was going on within me. When I went to bed, the suffering grew even worse; or rather, it changed into a fire which penetrated all the faculties of my soul like lightning, piercing me to the marrow, and to the most secret recesses of my heart. In the midst of this suffering, I was unable to bring myself to do anything. "Your will be done, Lord." At times I could not even think these words. Truly, a deadly fear had taken hold of me, and the flames of hell were touching me. Toward morning, silence set in, and my tribulations disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, but I felt so frightfully exhausted that I could not even move. During my conversation with Mother Superior, my strength returned bit by bit, but God alone knows how I felt throughout that whole day.

497 O Eternal Truth, Word Incarnate, who most faithfully fulfilled Your Father's will, today I am becoming a martyr of Your inspirations, since I cannot carry them out because I have no will of my own, though interiorly I see Your will clearly. **(205)** I submit in everything to the will of my superiors and my confessor. I will follow Your will insofar as You will permit me to do so through Your representative. O my Jesus, it

cannot be helped, but I give priority to the voice of the Church over the voice with which You speak to me.

After Holy Communion

498 I saw Jesus in the usual way, and He spoke these words to me: **Lay your head on My shoulder, rest and regain your strength. I am always with you. Tell the friend of My Heart that I use such feeble creatures to carry out My work.** After a while my spirit was strengthened with great power. **Tell him that I had let him see your weakness during your confession to show him what you are of yourself.**

499 Each battle valiantly fought brings me joy, peace, light, experience and courage for the future; honor and glory to God; and in the end, for me, a reward.

Today is the Feast of Christ the King.

[October 27, 1935]

500 During Holy Mass I prayed fervently that Jesus might become King of all hearts and that divine grace might shine in every soul. Then I saw Jesus as He is depicted in the image, and He said to me, **My daughter, you give Me the greatest glory by faithfully fulfilling My desires.**

501 Oh, how great is Your beauty, Jesus my Spouse! Living Flower enclosing life-giving dew for a thirsting soul! My soul is drowned in You. You alone are the object of my desires and strivings. Unite me as closely as possible to Yourself, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit. Let me live and die in You.

502 Only love has meaning; it raises up our smallest actions into infinity.

503 My Jesus, truly I would not know how to live without You — my spirit is welded to Yours. No one can really understand this; one must first live in You in order to recognize You in others.

(206) Cracow, October 25, 1935.

Retreat Resolutions.

504 Not to do anything without the permission of my confessor and the

consent of my superiors in all things, but especially regarding these inspirations and demands of the Lord.

All my free time I will spend with the Divine Guest within my soul; I will safeguard my interior and exterior silence so that Jesus can rest in my heart.

My sweetest repose will be in serving and obliging the sisters, in forgetting about myself and thinking of how to please the sisters.

I will not offer explanations on my own behalf or seek to vindicate myself when criticized; I will let others judge me as they will.

I have only one trusted Friend in whom I confide everything, and that is Jesus — the Eucharist, and His representative — my confessor.

In the midst of all sufferings, both physical and spiritual, as well as in darkness and desolation, I will remain silent, like a dove, and not complain.

I will empty myself continually at His feet in order to obtain mercy for poor souls.

505 All my nothingness is drowned in the sea of Your mercy. With the confidence of a child, I throw myself into Your arms, O Father of Mercy, to make up for the unbelief of so many souls who are afraid to trust in You. Oh, how very few souls really know You! How ardently I desire that the Feast of Mercy be known by souls! Mercy is the crown of Your works; You provide for all with the love of a most tender mother.

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(207) J.M.J. Cracow, October 27, 1935.

Father Andrasz — Spiritual Counsel.

506 “Do nothing without the consent of the superiors. One must think this matter over thoroughly and pray much. One must be very careful about these things because, in your present situation, Sister, the will of God is certain and clear, for you are in fact bound to this Congregation by vows, and perpetual vows at that; so there should be no doubt. What you are experiencing interiorly, Sister, are only the glimmerings of a project. God

can make some alterations, but such things are very rare. Don't be in a hurry, Sister, until you have received more precise knowledge. The works of God proceed slowly, but if they are of Him, you will surely recognize them clearly. If they are not, they will disappear; and you, by being obedient, will not go astray. Speak frankly about everything to your confessor and obey him blindly.

“For the present, Sister, there is nothing more for you to do than accept the suffering until the time when everything will become clear; that is, all things will be resolved. You are well disposed as regards these matters, and so continue in this simplicity and spirit of obedience; this is a good sign. If you continue in this attitude, God will not allow you to fall into error. Still, as much as is possible, keep far away from these things, but if despite that they still come your way, receive them calmly and do not fear anything. You are in the good hands of a very good God. In all that you have told me, I do not see any illusion or anything contrary to faith. These are things which are good in themselves, and it would indeed be good if there were a group of souls pleading with God for the world, as we all are in need of prayer. You have a good director; stay with him and be at peace. Be faithful to God's will and carry it out. As to your duties, always do what you are told to do and as you are told to do it, no matter how humiliating or toilsome it might be. Always choose the last place, and then they themselves will say to you, ‘Go up higher.’ In spirit and in your demeanor, consider yourself the least in the whole house and in the entire Congregation. In everything and at all times, be most faithful to God.”

507 **(208)** I desire, O my Jesus, to suffer and burn with the flame of Your love in all the circumstances of my life. I am Yours, completely Yours, and I wish to disappear in You, O Jesus, I wish to be lost in Your divine beauty. You pursue me with Your love, O Lord; You penetrate my soul like a ray of the sun and change its darkness into Your light. I feel very vividly that I am living in You as one small spark swallowed up by the incomprehensible fire with which You burn, O inconceivable Trinity! No greater joy is to be found than that of loving God. Already here on earth we can taste the happiness of those in heaven by an intimate union with God, a union that is extraordinary and often quite incomprehensible to us. One can attain this very grace through simple faithfulness of soul.

508 When a reluctance and a monotony as regards my duties begins to take possession of me, I remind myself that I am in the house of the Lord, where nothing is small and where the glory of the Church and the progress of many a soul depend on this small deed of mine, accomplished in a divinized way. Therefore there is nothing small in a religious congregation.

509 In the adversities that I experience, I remind myself that the time for doing battle has not yet come to an end. I arm myself with patience, and in this way I defeat my assailant.

510 In no way do I seek perfection inquisitively, but I probe into the spirit of Jesus and fix my eyes on His deeds as summarized in the Gospel. Even if I lived a thousand years, I would not exhaust what is contained there.

511 When my intentions are not recognized, but rather condemned, I am not too much surprised, for I know that it is only God who scrutinizes my heart. Truth will not die; the wounded heart will regain peace in due time, and my spirit is strengthened through adversities. I do not always listen to what my heart tells me, but I keep asking God for light; and when I feel I have regained my equilibrium, then I say more.

512 (209) The day of the renewal of vows. The presence of God flooded my soul. During Holy Mass I saw Jesus, and He said to me, **You are My great joy; your love and your humility make Me leave the heavenly throne and unite Myself with you. Love fills up the abyss that exists between My greatness and your nothingness.**

513 Love is flooding my soul; I am plunged into an ocean of love. I feel that I am swooning and becoming completely lost in Him.

514 Jesus, make my heart like unto Yours, or rather transform it into Your own Heart that I may sense the needs of other hearts, especially those who are sad and suffering. May the rays of mercy rest in my heart.

515 In the evening, when I was walking in the garden saying my rosary and came to the cemetery,¹⁰² I opened the gate a little and began to pray for a while, and I asked them interiorly, “You are very happy are you not?” Then I heard the words, “We are happy in the measure that we have fulfilled God’s will” — and then silence as before. I became introspective

and reflected for a long time on how I am fulfilling God's will and how I am profiting from the time that God has given me.

516 On the evening of that same day, when I had already gone to bed, a certain soul came to me, woke me up by tapping on the night table and asked me to pray for her. I wanted to ask who she was, but I mortified my curiosity and joined this little mortification to my prayer and offered them for her.

517 Once, when visiting a sick sister¹⁰³ who was eighty-four and known for many virtues, I asked her, "Sister, you are surely ready to stand before the Lord, are you not?" She answered, "I have been preparing myself all my life long for this last hour." And then she added, "Old age does not dispense one from the combat."

518 **(210)** + Before All Souls' Day, I went to the cemetery at dusk. Although it was locked, I managed to open the gate a bit and said, "If you need something, my dear little souls, I will be glad to help you to the extent that the rule permits me." I then heard these words, "Do the will of God; we are happy in the measure that we have fulfilled God's will."

519 In the evening, these souls came and asked me to pray for them, and I did pray very much for them. In the evening, when the procession was returning from the cemetery, I saw a great multitude of souls walking with us into the chapel and praying with us. I prayed a good deal, for I had my superiors, permission¹⁰⁴ to do so.

520 During the night, a soul I had already seen before visited me. However, it did not ask for prayer, but reproached me, saying that I used to be very haughty and vain... "and now you are interceding for others while you yourself still have certain vices." I answered that I indeed had been vain and haughty, but that I had confessed this and had done penance for my stupidity, and that I trusted in the goodness of my God, and that if I still fell occasionally, this was indeliberate and never premeditated, even in the smallest things. Still, the soul continued to reproach me, saying, "Why are you unwilling to recognize my greatness? Why do you alone not glorify me for my great deeds as all others do?" Then I saw that this was Satan under the assumed appearance of this soul and I said, "Glory is due to God alone; begone Satan!" And in an instant this soul fell into an

abyss, horrible beyond all description. And I said to the wretched soul that I would tell the whole Church about this.

521 On Saturday we left Cracow and returned to Vilnius. On the way we visited Czestochowa. When I was praying before the miraculous picture, I felt that... are pleasing ... [unfinished thought].

[End of Notebook 1]

*The Mercy of the Lord I Will Sing
Forever*

*Divine Mercy in my soul Sr. M.
Faustina*

NOTEBOOK II

(1)+
J.M.J.

522 +The mercy of the Lord I will sing forever,
Before all the people will I sing it,
For it is God's greatest attribute
And for us an unending miracle.

You gush forth from the Divine Trinity,
But from one single womb filled with love.
The mercy of the Lord will be revealed in the soul
In all its fullness, when the veil falls.

From the fountain of Your mercy, O Lord,
Flows all happiness and life,
And thus, all creatures and the whole of creation
Sing out in ecstasy a song of mercy.

The bowels of God's mercy are opened for us
Through the life of Jesus, stretched on the Cross.
O sinner, you must not doubt or despair,
But trust in mercy, for you also can become holy.

Two streams in the form of rays
Have gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus,
Not for Angels, nor Cherubim, nor Seraphim,
But for the salvation of sinful man.

(2) +
J.M.J.

523 O will of God,
be my love.

My Jesus, You know that of myself I would not have written a single
letter, and if I do write, it is only because of a clear command of holy
obedience.

God and Souls

S. M. Faustina

of the Blessed Sacrament¹⁰⁵

524 + O Jesus, hidden God,
My heart perceives You
Though veils hide You;
You know that I love You.

(3) +
J.M.J.

Vilnius, November 24, 1935

+ Notebook Two

Blessed Be God!

525 O Holy Trinity, in whom is contained the inner life of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, eternal joy, inconceivable depth of love, poured out upon all creatures and constituting their happiness, honor and glory be to Your holy name forever and ever. Amen.

When I consider Your greatness and beauty. O my God, I rejoice exceedingly that the Lord I serve is so great. With love and joy I carry out His will, and the more I come to know Him, the more I desire to love Him. I burn with the desire to love Him ever more and more.

526 (4) + The 14th. This Thursday, when we were having nocturnal adoration, at first I could not pray; a sort of dryness engulfed me. I could not meditate on Jesus' sorrowful Passion. So I lay prostrate and offered the most sorrowful Passion of the Lord Jesus to the heavenly Father in reparation for the sins of all the world. When I got to my feet after this prayer and walked to my kneeler, I suddenly saw Jesus next to it. The Lord Jesus appeared as He was during the scourging. In His hands He was holding a white garment with which He clothed me and a cord with which He girded me, and He covered me with a red cloak like the one He was clothed with during His Passion and a veil of the same color, and He said to me, **This is how you and your companions are going to be clothed. My life from birth to death on the Cross will be the rule for you. Fix your eyes upon Me and live according to what you see. I desire that you penetrate into My spirit more deeply and understand (5) that I am meek and humble of heart.**

527 On one occasion, I felt an urge to set to work and fulfill whatever God is demanding of me. I entered the chapel for a moment and heard a voice in my soul saying, **Why are you afraid? Do you think that I will not have enough omnipotence to support you?** At that moment, my soul felt extraordinary strength, and all the adversities that could befall me in carrying out God's will seemed as nothing to me.

528 On Friday, during Mass, when my soul was flooded with God's happiness, I heard these words in my soul: **My mercy has passed into souls through the divine-human Heart of Jesus as a ray from the sun passes through crystal.** I felt in my heart and understood that every approach to God is brought about by Jesus, in Him and through Him.

529 (6) On the evening of the last day [November 15] of the novena at Ostra Brama, after the singing of the litany, one of the priests exposed the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance. When he placed it on the altar, I immediately saw the Infant Jesus, stretching out His little arms, first of all toward His Mother, who at that time had taken on a living appearance. When the Mother of God was speaking to me, Jesus stretched out His tiny hands toward the congregation. The Blessed Mother was telling me to accept all that God asked of me like a little child, without questioning; otherwise it would not be pleasing to God. At that moment, the Infant Jesus vanished, and the Mother of God was again lifeless, and Her picture was the same as it had been before. But my soul was filled with great joy and gladness, and I said to the Lord, "Do with me as You please; I am ready for everything, but You, O Lord, must not abandon me even for a moment."

(7) +
J.M.J.

530 To the Glory of the Holy Trinity.

I asked Mother Superior [Borgia] to permit me to make a forty-day fast, taking once a day a piece of bread and a glass of water. However, following the advice of my confessor [Father Sopocko], Mother Superior did not agree to forty days, but to seven. "I cannot take you away from your duties completely, Sister, because of the other sisters who might notice something. I give you my permission to devote yourself to prayer

and to note down some of these things, but it will be very difficult for me to protect you as regards the fasting. Really, I can think of no solution to this,” and she said, “Go now, Sister, and perhaps some light will come to me.” On Sunday morning, I understood that when Mother Superior assigned me as portress during mealtime, she was doing so with the thought of giving me the opportunity to fast. In the morning, I did not go to breakfast, but, a little while later, I went **(8)** to Mother Superior and asked her whether I had been assigned as portress in view of making it possible for me to fast unnoticed. Mother replied, “When I assigned you,¹⁰⁶ Sister, it was with this in mind.” I then saw that this was the same thought that I had had interiorly.

531 November 24, 1935. Sunday, first day. I went at once before the Blessed Sacrament and offered myself with Jesus, present in the Most Holy Sacrament, to the Everlasting Father. Then I heard these words in my soul: **Your purpose and that of your companions is to unite yourselves with Me as closely as possible; through love You will reconcile earth with heaven, you will soften the just anger of God, and you will plead for mercy for the world. I place in your care two pearls very precious to My Heart: these are the souls of priests and religious. You will pray particularly for them; their power will come from your diminishment. You will join prayers, fasts, mortifications, labors (9) and all sufferings to My prayer, fasting, mortification, labors and sufferings and then they will have power before My Father.**

532 After Holy Communion, I saw the Lord Jesus, who said these words to me: **Today, penetrate into the spirit of My poverty and arrange everything in such a way that the most destitute will have no reason to envy you. I find pleasure, not in large buildings and magnificent structures, but in a pure and humble heart.**

533 When I was by myself, I began to reflect on the spirit of poverty. I clearly saw that Jesus, although He is Lord of all things, possessed nothing. From a borrowed manger He went through life doing good to all, but Himself having no place to lay His head. And on the Cross, I see the summit of His poverty, for He does not even have a garment on Himself. O Jesus, through a solemn vow of poverty I desire to become like You;

poverty will be my mother. **(10)** As exteriorly we should possess nothing and have nothing to dispose of as our own; so interiorly we should desire nothing. And in the Most Blessed Sacrament, how great is Your poverty! Has there ever been a soul as abandoned as You were on the Cross, Jesus?

534 Chastity. There is no need to explain that this vow forbids all those things prohibited by the sixth and ninth commandments: deeds, thoughts, words, feelings... I understand that a solemn vow differs from a simple vow; I understand this in all its implications. While reflecting upon this, I heard these words in my soul: **You are My spouse forever; your chastity should be greater than that of the angels, for I call no angel to such intimacy as I do you. The smallest act of My spouse is of infinite value. A pure soul has inconceivable power before God.**

535 **(11)** Obedience. **I have come to do My Father's will. I obeyed My parents, I obeyed My tormentors and now I obey the priests.** I understand, O Jesus, the spirit of obedience and in what it consists. It includes not only external performance, but also the reason, the will and judgment. Obeying our superiors, we obey God. It makes no difference whether it is an angel or a man who, acting in God's stead, gives me orders; I must always obey. I am not going to write much about the vows; they are clear and specific. I will rather put down a few general thoughts about this congregation.

+ General Summary.

536 There will never be any splendid houses, but only a small church with a small community consisting of a few souls, not more than ten, plus two externs to look after the external affairs **(12)** of the community and the church. These two sisters will not wear the habit, but secular dress; they will take simple vows, and they will depend strictly on the superior who will be cloistered. They will share in all the spiritual benefits of the congregation. There must never be more than two and, preferably, only one. Each house will be independent of the others, although they will be closely united by the rule, the vows and the spirit. In exceptional cases, however, a sister from one community may be transferred to another and also, if there is question of founding a new house, some sisters may be transferred, if need be, from another house. Each house will depend on

the local ordinary.

537 Each sister will have a separate cell, but life will be communal as regards prayer, meals and recreation. Each nun, after her profession, **(13)** will no longer see the world, even through a grill, as this will be covered with a dark cloth, and even the conversations will be strictly limited. She will be as if dead, not understood by the world and not understanding the world. She is to stand between heaven and earth, begging God constantly for mercy on the world and that priests be empowered so that their words be not empty and that they, in their extraordinary dignity and so exposed to risks, might keep themselves completely stainless. Though these souls will not be numerous, they will be heroic souls. There will be no room for cowardly or effeminate souls.

538 There will be no distinction between the sisters, no mothers,¹⁰⁷ no reverends, no venerables, but all will be equal, even though there might be great differences in their parentage. We know who Jesus was, and yet how He humbled Himself and with whom He associated. Their habit will be like that worn by Jesus during His Passion, and they will not simply wear the robe [He wore]; **(14)** they must also seal themselves with the marks He bore: suffering and scorn. Each one will strive for the greatest self-denial and have a love of humility, and she who will distinguish herself most in this latter virtue will be the one who is capable of leading the others.

539 As God has made us sharers in His mercy and even more than that, dispensers of that mercy, we should therefore have great love for each soul, beginning with the elect and ending with the soul that does not yet know God. By prayer and mortification, we will make our way to the most uncivilized countries, paving the way for the missionaries. We will bear in mind that a soldier on the front line cannot hold out long without support from the rear forces that do not actually take part in the fighting but provide for all his needs; and that such is the role of prayer, and that therefore each one of us is to be distinguished by an apostolic spirit.

540 **(15)** In the evening when I was writing, I heard a voice in my cell which said, “Do not leave this Congregation; have mercy upon yourself, such great sufferings are in store for you.” When I looked in the direction of the voice, I saw nothing, and I continued to write. Suddenly, I heard a

noise and the words: “When you leave, we will destroy you. Do not torture us.” I glanced around and saw many ugly monsters. So I mentally made the Sign of the Cross and they disappeared immediately. How terribly ugly Satan is! The poor damned souls that have to keep him company! Just the sight of him is more disgusting than all the torments of hell.

541 A short time later, I heard this voice in my soul: **Do not fear anything; nothing will happen to you against My will.** After these words of the Lord, a strange power entered my soul. I rejoiced greatly that God is so good.

542 **(16)** Postulancy.¹⁰⁸ Age of admission: any person between the ages of fifteen and thirty. Firstly, the spirit with which the candidate is imbued and her character are to be taken into consideration, whether she has a strong will and the courage to follow in Jesus’ footsteps with joy and gladness, as God loves a cheerful giver. She must despise the world and herself. The lack of a dowry will never be an obstacle to admission. All formalities concerning the candidate must be clear; no complicated cases should be admitted.

Melancholy persons, those disposed to sadness, those suffering from contagious diseases, those of an unstable character and those who are inclined to be suspicious of others are not adaptable to the religious life and must not be admitted. Members should be selected with greatest care, as one ill-fitting member is enough to throw the whole convent into confusion.

543 The duration of the postulancy. The postulancy will last one year. **(17)** During this time, the candidate should examine whether she is attracted to this type of life and whether it is suitable to her. The directress should also diligently consider whether or not the person in question is suitable for this type of life. After a year, if the postulant shows evidence of a stable will and an earnest desire to serve God, she should be admitted to the novitiate.

544 The novitiate¹⁰⁹ is to last one year, without any interruption. At this time the novice should be taught about the virtues relating to the vows and about the importance of the vows. The directress should do her utmost to

provide a solid formation. Let her train the novices in the practice of humility, because only a humble heart keeps the vows easily and experiences the great joys that God pours out upon the faithful soul.

The novices should not be burdened with duties that entail responsibilities, so that they may be free to devote themselves to their own perfection. They are obliged to observe the rules and statutes strictly, as are the postulants.

545 **(18)** After a year of novitiate, if the novice proves faithful, she may be admitted to make her profession for one year. This is to be repeated for three years. She may then be given duties of responsibility. However, she will still belong to the novitiate, and once a week she must attend conferences together with the novices, and she will spend the last six months entirely in the novitiate in order to prepare well for her solemn profession.^{[110](#)}

546 Meals. We will have no meat. Our meals shall be such that not even the poor will have any reason to envy us. Still, feast days may differ slightly from regular days. The sisters will eat three times a day. Fasts, especially the two great ones, will be observed strictly, according to the original spirit. The food should be the same for all the nuns without **(19)** exception so that communal life may be kept pure. This refers not only to food but to clothing and the furnishing of cells as well. However, if a sister should fall ill, she should receive every consideration.

547 Prayers. One hour of meditation, Holy Mass and Holy Communion, prayers, two examinations of conscience, office,^{[111](#)} rosary, spiritual reading, one hour of prayer during the night. As to the horarium, it is better to draw it up after we have begun to live this type of life.

548 Suddenly I heard these words in my soul: **My daughter, I assure you of a permanent income on which you will live. Your duty will be to trust completely in My goodness, and My duty will be to give you all you need. I am making Myself dependent upon your trust: if your trust is great, then My generosity will be without limit.**

549 **(20)** Work. As poor persons, the nuns themselves will do all the work in the convent. Each one should be glad when she is given some work

which is humbling or which goes against her nature, as that will greatly help her interior formation. The superior will often change the sisters' duties, and in this way help them to detach themselves completely from the little details to which women have a great attachment. Truly, I often find it amusing to see with my own eyes souls who have forsaken really great things only to attach themselves to fiddle faddle; that is, trifles. Each sister, including even the superior, shall work in the kitchen for a month. Every one should take a turn at every chore which is to be done in the convent.

550 And always and in everything, their intention should be pure, for every sort of mixed motive is displeasing to God. They should accuse themselves of all external transgressions, **(21)** and ask the Superior for a penance. They should do this in a spirit of humility.

They should love one another with a sublime love, with a pure love, seeing God's likeness in every sister. Love should be the special characteristic of this little community, so they must not close up their hearts, but embrace the whole world, rendering mercy to every soul through prayer, according to their calling. If we live in this spirit of mercy, we ourselves will obtain mercy.

551 How great should each one's love for the Church be! As a good child prays for the mother it loves, so also should every Christian soul pray for the Church, its Mother. What then should be said of us religious who have especially committed ourselves to praying for the Church? How great, then, is our apostolate, hidden though it be. All our little daily nothings will be placed at the feet of the Lord Jesus as a propitiatory offering for the world; but in order that **(22)** our offering may be pleasing to God, it must be pure. And for it to be pure, the heart must be freed of all natural attachments, and all its affections must be directed towards the Creator, loving all creatures in Him and according to His will; and, acting thus, each with a zealous spirit will bring joy to the Church.

552 In addition to the vows, I see one rule as most important. Although all the rules are important, I put this one in first place, and it is silence. Truly, if this rule were to be observed strictly, I would not worry about the others. Women are very fond of talking, but the Holy Spirit does not speak to a soul that is distracted and garrulous. He speaks by His quiet

inspirations to a soul that is recollected, to a soul that knows how to keep silence. If silence were strictly observed, there would not be any grumbling, bitterness, slandering, or gossip, and charity would not be tarnished. **(23)** In a word, many wrongs would not be done. Silent lips are pure gold and bear witness to holiness within.

553 But I want to speak immediately of a second rule; that is, speech. Keeping silent when one ought to speak is an imperfection and sometimes even a sin. And so, let all the sisters take part in recreation, and the superior should not dispense them from this except for a matter of great importance. Recreation is an opportunity for getting to know one another. Let each sister speak her mind in all simplicity for the edification of the others and not in a spirit of superiority nor, God forbid, in a quarrelsome manner, for that would not be in keeping with perfection and the spirit of our vocation, which should be especially characterized by love. Twice a day, there will be a recreation of one half hour. But if a sister breaks silence outside that time, **(24)** she must accuse herself before the Superior at once and ask for a penance, and the Superior should punish these offenses with public penances, or else she will answer for this before the Lord.

554 Enclosure.¹¹² No one may enter the enclosure without the special permission of the Ordinary and under very special circumstances, such as the administration of the Sacraments to the ill in order to prepare them for death, and for the burial rites. There also may be need of letting in a workman to do some repairs, but for this a specific permission will be required. The door to the enclosure will always be locked and only the Superior will have the key.

555 The use of the parlor. None of the sisters will make use of the parlor without special permission of the Superior, and the Superior should not permit frequent visits. **(25)** Those who have died to the world should not be going back to it, not even through conversations. But if the Superior thinks it right to permit some sister to go to the parlor, let her observe the following directions. She herself should accompany the sister, and if she cannot do so, she should arrange to be replaced by a sister who will be bound to confidence and must not repeat what she has heard, but who is to inform the Superior of everything. Conversations ought to be short,

unless there is permission for extra time for the sake of the person who has come for the visit. However, the curtain is not to be drawn aside, except for very special cases, as for example when a mother or father urgently asks that this be done.

556 Letters. Every sister may write sealed letters to the Ordinary to whom the house is subject. For any other letter, permission is required, and the sister shall hand the letter unsealed to the Superior. The Superior is to be guided by the spirit of love **(26)** and prudence, and has the right to send or withhold the letter, in the light of whatever is for the greater glory of God. However, I would like very much that such communications be as rare as possible. Let us help people by prayer and mortification, and not by correspondence.

557 Confession. Both the regular and the extraordinary confessors for the community will be appointed by the Ordinary [Bishop].¹¹³ There will be one regular confessor, and he will hear the sisters' confessions once a week. The extraordinary confessor will come once every three months, and each sister is obliged to see him, even if she makes no confession. The two confessors will hold their posts in the convent for three years. Then there will be a secret vote, and the Superior will submit the results to the Ordinary. The confessor can be re-appointed for an additional three years and even a third three-year term. **(27)** The sisters will make their confession through a locked grille. The conferences to the community will also be given through a grille, covered with a dark curtain. The sisters will never talk among themselves about confession or the confessors; rather, let them pray for them that God may give them the light to direct their souls.

558 Holy Communion. The sisters should never talk about who goes more and who goes less frequently to Holy Communion. They should refrain from passing judgment on this subject which does not concern them. All judgments in this matter belong exclusively to the confessor. The Superior may speak to a sister, not to inquire why she is not going to Communion, but simply to make confession available to her. The superiors should never dare to enter into the domain of the sisters' consciences. The Superior may sometimes arrange that the community offer **(28)** Communion for a certain intention. Each sister should strive

for the greatest purity of soul, so that she might receive the Divine Visitor every day.

559 On one occasion, when I entered the chapel, I saw the walls of a building in a state of disrepair [a torn down building].¹¹⁴ The windows were without panes, and the doors had only frames with no paneling. Then I heard these words in my soul: **This is where the convent will be**, I was a little disappointed that these ruins were to be the convent.

560 Thursday. I felt urged to undertake as soon as possible the task which the Lord was asking of me. While making my confession, I was holding to my own opinion over that of the confessor. At first, I did not realize this, but when I was making my Holy Hour I saw the Lord Jesus (29) as He appears in the Image, and He told me that I must repeat to my confessor and my superiors everything He says to me or asks of me... **and do only what you receive permission to do.** And He gave me to know how displeased He was with persons who are self-willed, and I recognized that I was one of these. I saw this shadow of self-will in myself, and I threw myself in the dust¹¹⁵ before His Majesty and, with a broken heart, begged His pardon. But Jesus did not let me remain in this state for long. His divine gaze filled my heart with such joy that I have no words to express it. And Jesus gave me to know that I should ask Him more questions and seek His advice. Truly, how sweet is the look of my Lord; His eyes penetrate my soul to its most secret depths. My spirit communicates with God without any word being spoken. I am aware that He is living in me and I in Him.

561 (30) All at once, I saw the image in some small chapel and at that moment I saw that the chapel became an enormous and beautiful temple. And in this temple I saw the Mother of God with the Infant in Her arms. And a moment later, the Infant Jesus disappeared from the arms of His Mother, and I saw the living image of Jesus Crucified. The Mother of God told me to do what She had done, that, even when joyful, I should always keep my eyes fixed on the cross, and She told me that the graces God was granting me were not for me alone, but for other souls as well.

562 When I see the Infant Jesus during Holy Mass, it is not always the same: sometimes He is very joyous, and sometimes He is not even looking at the chapel. At present, He is often very joyful when our confessor [Father

Sopocko] offers Holy Mass. I was greatly surprised that the Infant Jesus loves him so much. Sometimes I see Him dressed in a colorful pinafore.¹¹⁶

563 **(31)** Before I came to Vilnius and met this confessor, I once saw a rather small church and near it, this congregation.¹¹⁷ The convent had twelve cells: each nun was to live separately. I saw the priest [Father Sopocko] who was helping me to prepare the convent and whom I was to meet some years later, but whom I already knew from the vision. I saw how he was arranging everything in the convent with great care, assisted by another priest [probably Father Wantuchowski¹¹⁸] whom I have not yet met. I saw the iron grating, covered with a dark curtain, and the sisters did not go out to the church.

564 On the feast day of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, during Holy Mass, I heard the rustling of garments and saw the most holy Mother of God in a most beautiful radiance. Her white garment was girdled with a blue **(32)** sash. She said to me, *You give Me great joy when you adore The Holy Trinity for the graces and privileges which were accorded Me.* And She immediately disappeared.

Penances and Mortification.

565 Interior mortifications take the first place, but besides this, we must practice exterior mortifications, strictly determined, so that all can practice them. These are: on three days a week, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, there will be a strict fast; each Friday, all the sisters — each one in her own cell — will take the discipline¹¹⁹ for the length of the recitation of Psalm 50, and all will do this at the same time; namely, three o'clock; and this will be offered for dying sinners. During the two great fasts,¹²⁰ ember days¹²¹ and vigils,¹²² the food will consist of a piece of bread and some water, once a day.

Let each sister try to observe these mortifications which are prescribed **(33)** for all. But if anyone desires to do something more, she should ask the superior for permission. One more general mortification: no sister is allowed to enter the cell of another without special permission from the Superior, but the Superior should sometimes unexpectedly enter the cells of the sisters, not in order to spy, but in the spirit of love and the

responsibility which she has before God. None of the sisters will lock anything; the rule will be the general key for all.

566 One day, after Holy Communion, I suddenly saw the Infant Jesus standing by my kneeler and holding on to it with His two little hands. Although He was but a little Child, my soul was filled with awe and fear, for I see in Him my Judge, my Lord, and my Creator, before whose holiness the Angels tremble. At the same time, my soul was flooded with such unspeakable **(34)** love that I thought I would die under its influence. I now see that Jesus first strengthens my soul and makes it capable of abiding with Him, for otherwise I would not be able to bear what I experience at such a moment.

Relationship of Sisters with the Superior.

567 All the sisters should respect the Superior as the Lord Jesus himself, as I mentioned when speaking about the vow of obedience. They should behave toward her with childlike trust, and should never murmur or find fault with her commands, as this is very displeasing to God. Let each be guided by a spirit of faith in her relationship to superiors; let her ask with simplicity for all that she needs. God forbid that it ever happen or be repeated that any of the sisters would be a cause of sorrow or tears to the Superior. Let each one know that as the fourth commandment obliges a child to honor its parents, in like manner is the religious bound to respect her Superior. Only a bad **(35)** religious would take the liberty of judging her Superior. Let the sisters be sincere with the Superior, telling her about everything and about their needs with childlike simplicity.

The sisters will address the Superior thus: “With your leave, Sister Superior.” They shall never kiss her hand, but whenever they meet her in the corridor or enter her cell, they should say, “Praised be Jesus Christ,” bowing their heads slightly.

They shall address each other as “Sister,” adding the proper name. Their relationship toward the Superior should be marked by a spirit of faith and not by sentimentality or flattery, as these are unworthy of a religious and would degrade her very much. A religious should be as free as a queen, and will be such only when she lives in the spirit of faith. We should obey and respect the Superior, not because she is good, holy or prudent,

but solely because she represents God, and by obeying her we are obeying God Himself.

(36) Relationship of the Superior to the Sisters.

568 The Superior should be distinguished by humility and love toward each sister without exception. She must not let herself be led by likes and dislikes, but by the spirit of Christ alone. Let her be aware that God will demand of her an account for each sister. She should not moralize to the sisters, but rather set them an example of profound humility and self-denial; this will be the most efficacious lesson she can give her subjects. She should be firm, but never harsh. She should be patient when bothered with the same questions. Even if she has to give the same answer a hundred times over, she should do so with equanimity. Let her strive to anticipate the sisters' needs rather than wait till they ask for this or that, for people vary in disposition.

If the Superior notices that a sister is sad or is suffering, she should try her very best to help and comfort her. She should pray much and ask for light **(37)** in order to know how to deal with each sister, for each soul is a world of its own. God has various ways of communicating with souls, ways that are often beyond our comprehension and notice. Therefore, the Superior should be careful not to hinder God's action in a soul. She should never reprimand a sister when irritated; rather, reprimands should always be seasoned with encouragement. The person is to be helped to recognize and acknowledge her error, but she should not be crushed.

The Superior should be outstanding for a love for her sisters which shows itself in actions. She should take upon herself all burdens so as to ease the burdens of the sisters. She should not demand any services from them, but should respect them as brides of Jesus and be always ready to serve them, day and night. Let her ask rather than order. Her heart should be open to the sufferings of the sisters, and she herself should look closely at, and learn from, the open book; namely, Jesus Crucified. Let her pray fervently for light, especially when she has some important dealing with a **(38)** sister. She should be on her guard lest she interfere with the sisters' consciences, for only a priest has this grace. But it may happen that a sister may feel the necessity to pour out her soul to the Superior, in which case the Superior may listen to this outpouring, but she is bound to

secrecy, as nothing hurts a person so much as to have something she has said in confidence or in secret talked about with others. Women usually have weak heads in this respect; it is rarely that one finds a woman with a man's mind. The Superior should strive for deep union with God, and God will govern through her. The most holy Mother will be the Superior¹²³ of the convent, and we shall be Her faithful daughters.

569 December 15, 1935. From early morning, today, a strange power has been pushing me to action, not giving me a moment's peace. A strange ardor has been lit in my heart, urging me to action, and I cannot stop it. This is a secret martyrdom known only to God, but let Him do **(39)** with me as He pleases; my heart is ready for anything. O Jesus, my dearest Master, do not abandon me, not even for a moment. Jesus, You know well how weak I am of myself; that is why I know that it is my weakness that forces You to be with me constantly.

570 On one occasion, I saw Jesus in a bright garment; this was in the greenhouse. [He said to me,] **Write what I say to you. My delight is to be united with you. With great desire, I wait and long for the time when I shall take up My residence sacramentally in your convent. My spirit will rest in that convent and I will bless its neighborhood in a special way. Out of love for you all, I will avert any punishments which are rightly meted out by My Father's justice. My daughter, I have inclined My heart to your requests. Your assignment and duty here on earth is to beg for mercy for (40) the whole world. No soul will be justified until it turns with confidence to My mercy, and this is why the first Sunday after Easter is to be the Feast of Mercy. On that day, priests are to tell everyone about My great and unfathomable mercy. I am making you the administrator of My mercy. Tell the confessor that the Image is to be on view in the church and not within the enclosure in that convent. By means of this Image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so, let every soul have access to it.**

571 O my Jesus, Eternal Truth, I fear nothing, neither hardships nor sufferings; I fear only one thing, and that is to offend You. My Jesus, I would rather not exist than make You sad. Jesus, You know that my love knows no one but You. My soul is absorbed in You.

572 **(41)** Oh, how great should be the ardor of every soul who will live in that convent, since God desires to come and live with us! Let everyone remember that if we religious do not intercede before God, who will? Each of us should burn like a pure sacrifice before the majesty of God, but to be pleasing to God, each one should unite herself closely to Jesus. It is only with Him, in Him, and through Him that we can be pleasing to God.

573 December 21, 1935. One day, my confessor [Father Sopocko] told me to go and look at a certain house to see whether it was the same house I had seen in my vision. When I went with my confessor to see that house, or rather those ruins, at a glance I recognized that they were the same as I had seen in my vision. The moment I touched the boards which had been nailed together in place of the doors, a strength pervaded my soul like a flash, giving me **(42)** unshakable certitude. I went away quickly from that place, my heart full of joy, for it seemed to me that there was a certain force chaining me to that place.

I am very happy to see that everything agrees perfectly with what I saw in the vision. When the confessor spoke to me about the arrangement of the cells and other things, I recognized everything to be the same as had been told to me by Jesus. I am delighted that God is acting in this way through my confessor, but I am not surprised that God is giving him so much light; since God, who is Light itself, lives in a pure and humble heart, and all sufferings and adversities serve but to reveal the soul's holiness. When I returned home, I went immediately to our chapel to rest a while. Then, suddenly, I heard these words in my soul: **Do not fear anything. I am with you. These matters are in My hands and I will bring them to fruition according to My mercy, for nothing can oppose My will.**

(43) Christmas Eve, 1935.

574 From early morning, my spirit was immersed in God. His presence pervaded my whole being. In the evening, before supper, I went to the chapel for a minute to share the wafer, at the feet of Jesus, with those who are far away and whom Jesus loves greatly and to whom I owe so much. Just as I was spiritually sharing the wafer with a certain person [probably Father Sopocko], I heard these words within me: **His heart is, for Me, a heaven on earth.** When I was leaving the chapel, in an instant,

God's omnipotence enveloped me. I understood how greatly God loves us. Oh, if people could at least partly comprehend and understand this!

Christmas Day.

575 Midnight Mass. During Holy Mass, I again saw the little Infant Jesus, extremely beautiful, joyfully stretching out His little arms to me. **(44)** After Holy Communion, I heard the words: **I am always in your heart; not only when you receive Me in Holy Communion, but always.** I spent these holydays in great joy.

576 O Holy Trinity, Eternal God, my spirit is drowned in Your beauty. The ages are as nothing in Your sight. You are always the same. Oh, how great is Your majesty. Jesus, why do You conceal Your majesty, why have You left Your heavenly throne and dwelt among us? The Lord answered me, **My daughter, love has brought Me here, and love keeps Me here. My daughter, if you knew what great merit and reward is earned by one act of pure love for Me, you would die of joy. I am saying this that you may constantly unite yourself with Me through love, for this is the goal of the life of your soul. This act is an act of the will. Know that a pure soul is humble. (45) When you lower and empty yourself before My majesty, I then pursue you with My graces and make use of My omnipotence to exalt you.**

577 Once, when my confessor told me to say "Glory be to the Father" as my penance, it took me a very long time; and I began many times, but did not finish, because my spirit became united with God, and I could not stick to the prayer. Quite frequently, I am unwittingly enveloped by God's omnipotence and become entirely plunged in Him through love, and then I do not know what is going on around me. When I told my confessor that this short prayer often takes very much of my time and that sometimes I cannot even finish it, he told me to say it right away, there, at the confessional. However, my spirit became immersed in God and, in spite of my efforts, I could not think as I wished. And so the confessor said, "Please repeat after me." **(46)** I repeated every word, but while I was pronouncing each word, my spirit would be steeped in the Person I was naming.

578 On one occasion, Jesus told me, concerning a certain priest [probably

Father Sopocko], that these present years would be the adornment of his priestly life. The days of suffering always seem longer, but they too will pass, though they pass so slowly that it seems they are moving backwards. However, their end is near, and then will come endless and inconceivable joy. Eternity! Who can understand this one word which comes from You, O incomprehensible God, this one word: eternity!

579 I know that the graces given me by God are often meant exclusively for certain souls. Awareness of this fills me with great joy; I always rejoice at the good of other souls as if it were my own.

580 **(47) On a certain occasion, the Lord said to me, I am more deeply wounded by the small imperfections of chosen souls than by the sins of those living in the world.** It made me very sad that chosen souls make Jesus suffer, and Jesus told me, **These little imperfections are not all. I will reveal to you a secret of My Heart: what I suffer from chosen souls. Ingratitude in return for so many graces is My Heart's constant food, on the part of [such] a chosen soul. Their love is lukewarm, and My Heart cannot bear it; these souls force Me to reject them. Others distrust My goodness and have no desire to experience that sweet intimacy in their own hearts, but go in search of Me, off in the distance, and do not find Me. This distrust of My goodness hurts Me very much. If My death has not convinced you of My love, what will? Often a soul wounds Me mortally, and then no one can comfort Me. (48) They use My graces to offend Me. There are souls who despise My graces as well as all the proofs of My love. They do not wish to hear My call, but proceed into the abyss of hell. The loss of these souls plunges Me into deadly sorrow. God though I am, I cannot help such a soul because it scorns Me; having a free will, it can spurn Me or love Me. You, who are the dispenser of My mercy, tell all the world about My goodness, and thus you will comfort My Heart.**

581 **I will tell you most when you converse with Me in the depths of your heart. Here, no one can disturb My actions. Here, I rest as in a garden enclosed.**

582 The interior of my soul is like a large and magnificent world in which God and I live. Except for God, no one is allowed there. At the beginning

of this life with God, (49) I was dazzled and overcome with awe. His radiance blinded me, and I thought He was not in my heart; and yet those were the moments when God was working in my soul. Love was becoming purer and stronger, and the Lord brought my will into the closest union with His own holy will. No one will understand what I experience in that splendid palace of my soul where I abide constantly with my Beloved. No exterior thing hinders my union with God. Even if I used the most forceful words, they would not express even a shadow of how my soul revels in happiness and inexplicable love, as great and pure as the spring from which it flows; that is, God Himself. My spirit is so pervaded with God that I feel it physically, and the body partakes of these joys. Although it happens that God's touch varies in the same soul, it comes, however, from the same source.

583 (50) On one occasion, I saw Jesus thirsting and fainting, and He said to me, **I thirst**. When I gave Him water, He took it, but did not drink and immediately disappeared. He was clothed as He was during His Passion.

584 **When you reflect upon what I tell you in the depths of your heart, you profit more than if you had read many books. Oh, if souls would only want to listen to My voice when I am speaking in the depths of their hearts, they would reach the peak of holiness in a short time.**

585 January 8, 1936. When I went to see the Archbishop [Jalbrzykowski], I told him that Jesus was asking that I pray for God's mercy upon the world and that there be a religious congregation which would entreat the mercy of God for the world. I asked his permission for all the Lord Jesus was demanding of me. The Arch (51) bishop answered me in these words: "As for prayer, I give my permission and even encourage you, Sister, to pray as much as possible for the world and to beg God's mercy, as mercy is what we all need; and I presume that your confessor certainly does not forbid you to pray for this intention. But as regards this congregation, wait a while, Sister, so that all things may arrange themselves more favorably. This thing is good in itself, but there is no need to hurry. If it is God's will, it will be done, whether it be a little sooner or a little later. Why shouldn't it be? There are so many different kinds of congregations; this one too will come to be if God so wills. Be completely at peace. The Lord Jesus can do all things. Strive for a close

union with God and do not lose heart.” These words filled me with great joy.

586 When I left the Archbishop’s house, I heard the following words in my soul: **To confirm your spirit, (52) I speak through My representatives in accordance with what I demand of you, but know that this will not always be so. They will oppose you in many things, and through this My grace will be manifest in you, and it will be evident that this matter is My doing. But as for you, fear nothing; I am always with you. And know this, too, My daughter: all creatures, whether they know it or not, and whether they want to or not, always fulfill My will.**

587 Once, I suddenly saw Jesus in great majesty, and He spoke these words to me: **My daughter, if you wish, I will this instant create a new world, more beautiful than this one, and you will live there for the rest of your life.** I answered, “I don’t want any worlds. I want You, Jesus. I want to love You, with the same love that You have for me. I beg You for only one thing: to make my heart capable of loving You. (53) I am very much surprised at Your offer, my Jesus; what are those worlds to me? Even if You gave me a thousand of them, what are they to me? You know very well, Jesus, that my heart is dying of longing for You. Everything that is not You is nothing to me.” — At that moment, I could no longer see anything, but a strange force took over my soul, a strange fire sprang up in my heart, and I entered into a kind of agony for Him. Then I heard these words: **With no other soul do I unite Myself as closely and in such a way as I do with you, and this because of the deep humility and ardent love which you have for Me.**

588 On one occasion, I heard these words within me: **Every movement of your heart is known to Me. Know, My daughter, that one glance of yours directed at someone else would wound Me (54) more than many sins committed by another person.**

589 Love casts out fear. Since I came to love God with my whole being and with all the strength of my heart, fear has left me. Even if I were to hear the most terrifying things about God’s justice, I would not fear Him at all, because I have come to know Him well. God is love, and His Spirit is peace. I see now that my deeds which have flowed from love are more

perfect than those which I have done out of fear. I have placed my trust in God and fear nothing. I have given myself over to His holy will; let Him do with me as He wishes, and I will still love Him.

590 When I receive Holy Communion, I entreat and beg the Savior to heal my tongue, that I may never fail in love of neighbor.

591 **(55)** Jesus, You know how ardently I desire to hide so that no one may know me but Your sweetest Heart. I want to be a tiny violet, hidden in the grass, unknown in a magnificent enclosed garden in which beautiful lilies and roses grow. The beautiful rose and the lovely lily can be seen from afar, but in order to see a little violet, one has to bend low; only its scent gives it away. Oh, how happy I am to be able to hide myself in this way! O my divine Bridegroom, the flower of my heart and the scent of my pure love are for You. My soul has drowned itself in You, Eternal God. From the moment when You yourself drew me to Yourself, O my Jesus, the more I have known You, the more ardently I have desired You.

592 I learned in the Heart of Jesus that in heaven itself there is a heaven to which not all, but only chosen souls, have access. Incomprehensible is the happiness in which the soul will be immersed. O my God, oh, that I could describe this, even in some little degree. **(56)** Souls are penetrated by His divinity and pass from brightness to brightness, an unchanging light, but never monotonous, always new though never changing. O Holy Trinity, make yourself known to souls!

593 O my Jesus, nothing is better for the soul than humiliations. In contempt is the secret of happiness, when the soul recognizes that, of itself, it is only wretchedness and nothingness, and that whatever it possesses of good is a gift of God. When the soul sees that everything is given it freely and that the only thing it has of itself is its own misery, this is what sustains it in a continual act of humble prostration before the majesty of God. And God, seeing the soul in such a disposition, pursues it with His graces. As the soul continues to immerse itself more deeply into the abyss of its nothingness and need, God uses His omnipotence to exalt it. If there is a truly happy soul upon earth, it can only be **(57)** a truly humble soul. At first, one's self-love suffers greatly on this account, but after a soul has struggled courageously, God grants it much light by which it sees how wretched and full of deception everything is. God alone is in its

heart. A humble soul does not trust itself, but places all its confidence in God. God defends the humble soul and lets Himself into its secrets, and the soul abides in unsurpassable happiness which no one can comprehend.

594 One evening, one of the deceased sisters, who had already visited me a few times, appeared to me. The first time I had seen her, she had been in great suffering, and then gradually these sufferings had diminished; this time she was radiant with happiness, and she told me she was already in heaven. She told me that God had tried **(58)** our house with tribulation because Mother General [Michael] had given in to doubts, not believing what I had said about this soul. And further, as a sign that she only now was in heaven, God would bless our house. Then she came closer to me, embraced me sincerely and said, “I must go now.” I understood how closely the three stages of a soul’s life are bound together; that is to say, life on earth, in purgatory and in heaven [the Communion of Saints].

595 I have noticed many times that God tries certain people on account of those things about which He spoke to me, for mistrust displeases Jesus. Once, when I saw that God had tried a certain Archbishop [Jalbrzykowski] because he was opposed to the cause and distrustful of it, I felt sorry for him and pleaded with God for him, and God relieved his suffering. God is very displeased with lack of trust in Him, and this is why some souls lose many graces. Distrust **(59)** hurts His most sweet Heart, which is full of goodness and incomprehensible love for us. A priest should sometimes be distrustful in order to better ascertain the genuineness of gifts bestowed on a given soul; and when he does so in order to direct the soul to deeper union with God, his will be a great and incomprehensible reward indeed. But there is a great difference between this and disrespect and distrust of divine graces in a soul simply because one cannot comprehend and penetrate these things with one’s mind, and this latter is displeasing to the Lord. I greatly pity souls who encounter inexperienced priests.

596 Once, a certain priest [Father Sopocko¹²⁴] asked me to pray for him. I promised to pray, and asked for a mortification. When I received permission for **(60)** a certain mortification, I felt a great desire to give up all the graces that God’s goodness would intend for me that day in favor

of that priest, and I asked the Lord Jesus to deign to bestow on me all the sufferings and afflictions, both exterior and spiritual, that the priest would have had to suffer during that day. God partially answered my request and, at once, all sorts of difficulties and adversities sprang up out of nowhere, so much so that one of the sisters remarked out loud that the Lord Jesus must have a hand in this because everyone was trying Sister Faustina. The charges made were so groundless that what some sisters put forward, others denied, while I offered all this in silence on behalf of the priest.

But that was not all; I began to experience interior sufferings. First, I was seized by depression and aversion towards the sisters, then a kind of uncertainty began **(61)** to trouble me. I could not recollect myself during prayer, and various things would take hold of my mind. When, tired out, I entered the chapel, a strange pain seized my soul, and I began to weep softly. Then I heard in my soul a voice, saying, **My daughter, why are you weeping? After all, you yourself offered to undertake these sufferings. Know that what you have taken upon yourself for that soul is only a small portion. He is suffering much more.** And I asked the Lord, “Why are You treating him like that?” The Lord answered me that it was for the triple crown meant for him: that of virginity, the priesthood and martyrdom. At that moment, a great joy flooded my soul at the sight of the great glory that is going to be his in heaven. Right away I said the *Te Deum*¹²⁵ for this special grace of God; namely, of learning how God treats those He intends to have close to himself. Thus, all sufferings are nothing in comparison with what awaits us in heaven.

597 **(62)** One day, after our Mass, I suddenly saw my confessor [Father Sopocko] saying Mass in Saint Michael’s Church, in front of the picture of the Mother of God. It was at the time of the Offertory, and I saw the Infant Jesus clinging to him as if fleeing from something and seeking refuge in him. But when the time came for Holy Communion, He disappeared as usual. Suddenly, I saw the Blessed Mother, who shielded him with Her cloak and said, *Courage, My son*, courage. She said something else which I could not hear.

598 Oh, how ardently I desire that every soul would praise Your mercy. Happy is the soul that calls upon the mercy of the Lord. It will see that

the Lord will defend it as His glory, as He said. And who would dare fight against God? All you souls, praise the Lord's mercy **(63)** by trusting in His mercy all your life and especially at the hour of your death. And fear nothing, dear soul, whoever you are; the greater the sinner, the greater his right to Your mercy, O Lord. O Incomprehensible Goodness! God is the first to stoop to the sinner. O Jesus, I wish to glorify Your mercy on behalf of thousands of souls. I know very well, O my Jesus, that I am to keep telling souls about Your goodness, about Your incomprehensible mercy.

599 On one occasion, after a person had asked me for prayer, when I met the Lord I said to Him, "Jesus, I especially love those souls whom You love." And Jesus answered, **And as for Me, I bestow special graces on those souls for whom you intercede.**

600 How wondrously Jesus defends me; truly this is a great grace of God which I have experienced for a long time now.

601 **(64)** Once, when one of our sisters¹²⁶ became fatally ill and all the community¹²⁷ was gathered together, there was also a priest¹²⁸ there who gave the sister absolution. Suddenly, I saw many spirits of darkness. Then, forgetting that I was with the sisters, I seized the holywater sprinkler and sprinkled the spirits, and they disappeared at once. However, when the sisters came to the refectory, Mother Superior [Borgia] remarked that I should not have sprinkled the sick sister in the presence of the priest, as this was his duty. I accepted the admonition in the spirit of penance, but holy water is indeed of great help to the dying.

602 My Jesus, You see how weak I am of myself. Therefore, You Yourself direct my affairs. And know, Jesus, that without You I will not budge for any cause, but with You I will take on the most difficult things.

603 **(65)** January 29, 1936. In the evening, when I was in my cell, I suddenly saw a great light and a dark gray cross high up within the light. Suddenly, I found myself caught up close to the cross. I gazed at it intently, but could not understand anything, and so I prayed, asking what it could mean. At that moment I saw the Lord Jesus, and the cross disappeared. The Lord Jesus was sitting in a great light, and His legs, up to the knees, were drowned in the light so that I could not see them. Jesus bent toward

me, looked at me kindly and spoke to me about the will of the Heavenly Father. He told me that the most perfect and holy soul is the one that does the will of My Father, but there are not many such, and that He looks with special love upon the soul who lives His will. And Jesus told me that I was doing the will of God perfectly... **and for this reason I am uniting Myself with you and communing with you in a special and intimate way.**

God embraces with His incomprehensible love the soul who (66) lives by His will. I understood how much God loves us, how simple He is, though incomprehensible, and how easy it is to commune with Him, despite His great majesty. With no one do I feel as free and as much at ease as with Him. Even a mother and her truly loving child do not understand each other so well as God and I do. When I was in that state of communion with God, I saw two particular persons, and their sad interior condition was revealed to me. They were in a sorrowful state, but I trust that they, too, will glorify the mercy of God.

604 At the same time, I saw a certain person [Father Sopocko] and, in part, the condition of his soul and the ordeals God was sending him. His sufferings were of the mind and in a form so acute that I pitied him and said to the Lord, “Why do you treat him like that?” And the Lord answered, **For the sake of his triple crown.** And the Lord also gave me to understand what unimaginable glory awaits the person who resembles the (67) suffering Jesus here on earth. That person will resemble Jesus in His glory. The Heavenly Father will recognize and glorify our soul to the extent that He sees in us a resemblance to His Son. I understood that this assimilation into Jesus is granted to us while we are here on earth. I see pure and innocent souls upon whom God has exercised His justice; these souls are the victims who sustain the world and who fill up what is lacking in the Passion of Jesus. They are not many in number. I rejoice greatly that God has allowed me to know such souls.

605 O Holy Trinity, Eternal God, I thank You for allowing me to know the greatness and the various degrees of glory to which souls attain. Oh, what a great difference of depth in the knowledge of God there is between one degree and another! Oh, if people could only know this! O my God, if I were thereby able to attain one more degree, I would gladly suffer all the

torments of the martyrs put together. **(68)** Truly, all those torments seem as nothing to me compared with the glory that is awaiting us for all eternity. O Lord, immerse my soul in the ocean of Your divinity and grant me the grace of knowing You; for the better I know You, the more I desire You, and the more my love for You grows. I feel in my soul an unfathomable abyss which only God can fill. I lose myself in Him as a drop does in the ocean. The Lord has inclined himself to my misery like a ray of the sun upon a barren and rocky desert. And yet, under the influence of His rays, my soul has become covered with verdure, flowers, and fruit, and has become a beautiful garden for His repose.

606 My Jesus, despite Your graces, I see and feel all my misery. I begin my day with battle and end it with battle. As soon as I conquer one obstacle, ten more appear **(69)** to take its place. But I am not worried, because I know that this is the time of struggle, not peace. When the burden of the battle becomes too much for me, I throw myself like a child into the arms of the heavenly Father and trust I will not perish. O my Jesus, how prone I am to evil, and this forces me to be constantly vigilant. But I do not lose heart. I trust God's grace, which abounds in the worst misery.

607 In the midst of the worst difficulties and adversities, I do not lose inner peace or exterior balance, and this discourages my adversaries. Patience in adversity gives power to the soul.

608 February 2, [1936]. In the morning, when the bell awoke me, I was so overcome by drowsiness which I could not shake off that I jumped into cold water, and after two minutes the sleepiness left me. When I came to meditation **(70)** a host of absurd thoughts swarmed into my head, so much so that I had to struggle throughout the whole meditation. It was the same during prayer time, but when Mass began, a strange silence and joy filled my heart. Just then, I saw Our Lady with the Infant Jesus, and the Holy Old Man [St. Joseph] standing behind them. The most holy Mother said to me, *Take My Dearest Treasure*, and She handed me the Infant Jesus. When I took the Infant Jesus in my arms, the Mother of God and Saint Joseph disappeared. I was left alone with the Infant Jesus.

609 I said to Him, "I know that You are my Lord and Creator even though You are so tiny." Jesus stretched His little arms out to me and looked at me with a smile. My spirit was filled with incomparable joy. Then,

suddenly, Jesus disappeared, and it was time for Holy Communion. I went with the other sisters to the Holy Table, my soul deeply moved. After Holy Communion, (71) I heard these words in my soul: **I am in your heart, I whom you had in your arms.** I then pleaded with Jesus for a certain soul [Father Sopocko], asking the Lord to grant him the grace to fight, and to take this trial from him. **As you ask, so shall it be, but his merit will not be lessened.** Joy reigned in my soul that God is so good and merciful; God grants everything that we ask of Him with trust.

610 After each conversation with the Lord, my soul is extraordinarily strengthened, and a profound tranquility prevails therein and gives me such courage that I do not fear anything in the world, but fear only lest I make Jesus sad.

611 O my Jesus, I implore You by the goodness of Your most sweet Heart, let Your anger diminish and show us Your mercy. May Your wounds be our shield against Your Father's (72) justice. I have come to know You, O God, as the source of mercy that vivifies and nourishes every soul. Oh, how great is the mercy of the Lord; it surpasses all His other qualities! Mercy is the greatest attribute of God; everything that surrounds me speaks to me of this. Mercy is the life of souls; His compassion is inexhaustible. O Lord, look on us and deal with us according to Your countless mercies, according to Your great mercy.

612 One time, I was in doubt as to whether what had happened to me had seriously offended the Lord Jesus or not. As I could not solve this doubt, I made up my mind not to go to Communion before first going to confession, although I immediately made an act of contrition, as it is my habit to ask for forgiveness after the slightest transgression. During those days when I did not receive Holy Communion, (73) I did not feel the presence of God. This caused me unspeakable pain, but I took it as a punishment for sin. However, at the time of Holy Confession I was reproached for not going to Holy Communion, because what had happened to me was not an obstacle to receiving Holy Communion. After confession, I received Holy Communion, and I saw the Lord Jesus who said to me, **Know, My daughter, that you caused Me more sorrow by not uniting yourself with Me in Holy Communion than you did by that small transgression.**

613 One day, I saw a small chapel in which six sisters were receiving Holy Communion from our confessor [Father Sopocko], who was wearing a surplice and stole.¹²⁹ There were no decorations and no kneelers in the chapel. After Holy Communion, I saw the Lord Jesus as He is represented in the image. Jesus was walking away, and I called to Him, “How can You pass me by and not say anything to me, Lord? Without You, (74) I shall do nothing; You must stay with me and bless me, and this community and my country as well.” Jesus made the sign of the cross and said, **Do not fear anything; I am always with you.**

614 On the last two days before Lent we had an hour of propitiatory adoration with the girls.¹³⁰ During both hours I saw the Lord Jesus as He was after the scourging. My soul felt such great pain that it seemed to me that I was experiencing all those torments in my own body and in my own soul.

615 March 1, 1936. Today during Holy Mass I experienced a strange force and urge to start realizing God’s wishes. I had such a clear understanding of the things the Lord was asking of me that truly if I were to say **(75)** that I do not understand what God is demanding from me, I would be lying, because the Lord is making His will known to me so clearly and distinctly that I do not have the least shadow of a doubt about them. I realized that it would be the greatest ingratitude to delay any longer this undertaking which the Lord wishes to bring to fulfillment for His glory and the benefit of a great number of souls. And He is using me as a miserable tool through which to realize His eternal plans of mercy. Truly, how ungrateful my soul would be to resist God’s will any longer. Nothing will stop me any longer, be it persecution, sufferings, sneers, threats, entreaties, hunger, cold, flattery, friendships, adversities, friends or enemies; be it things I am experiencing now or things that will come in the future or even the hatred of hell — nothing will deter me from doing the will of God.

(76) I am not counting on my own strength, but on His omnipotence for, as he gave me the grace of knowing His holy will, He will also grant me the grace of fulfilling it. I cannot fail to mention how much my own lower nature resists this thing, manifesting its own desires, and there results within my soul a great struggle, like that of Jesus in the Garden of

Olives. And so I too cry out to God, the Eternal Father, “If it is possible, take this cup from me, but, nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done, O Lord; may Your will be done.” What I am about to go through is no secret to me, but with full knowledge I accept whatever You send me, O Lord. I trust in You, O merciful God, and I wish to be the first to manifest to You that confidence which You demand of souls. O Eternal Truth, help me and enlighten me along the roadways of life, and grant that Your will be accomplished in me.

(77) My God, I desire nothing but the fulfillment of Your will. It does not matter whether it will be easy or difficult. I feel an extraordinary force driving me to action. One thing alone holds me back, and that is holy obedience. O my Jesus, You urge me on the one hand and hold me back and restrain me on the other. In this, too, O my Jesus, may Your holy will be done.

I continued in this state, without a break, for many days. My physical strength declined, and though I did not speak to anyone about it, nevertheless Mother Superior [Borgia] noticed my pain and remarked that I had changed in appearance and was very pale. She told me to go to bed earlier and to sleep longer, and she had a cup of hot milk brought to me in the evening. She had a motherly heart, full of care, and tried to help me. But in the case of spiritual sufferings, (78) external things have no influence, and they do not bring much relief. It was from the confessional that I drew my strength and the consolation of knowing that it would not be long before I could begin to act.

616 On Thursday, when I went to my cell, I saw over me the Sacred Host in great brightness. Then I heard a voice that seemed to be coming from above the Host: **In the Host is your power; It will defend you.** After these words, the vision disappeared, but a strange power entered my soul, and a strange light as to what our love for God consists in; namely, in doing His will.

617 O Holy Trinity, Eternal God, I want to shine in the crown of Your mercy as a tiny gem whose beauty depends on the ray of Your (79) light and of Your inscrutable mercy. All that is beautiful in my soul is Yours, O God; of myself, I am ever nothing.

618 At the beginning of Lent, I asked my confessor for some mortification for this time of fast. I was told not to cut down on my food but, while eating, to meditate on how the Lord Jesus, on the Cross, accepted vinegar and gall. This would be my mortification. I did not know that this would be so beneficial to my soul. The benefit is that I am meditating constantly on His sorrowful Passion and so, while I am eating, I am not preoccupied with what I am eating, but am reflecting on my Lord's death.

619 At the beginning of Lent, I also asked to have the subject of my particular examen changed, and I was told to do everything with the pure intention of reparation for poor sinners. **(80)** This keeps me in continual union with God, and this intention perfects my actions, because everything I do is done for immortal souls. All hardships and fatigue are as nothing when I think that they reconcile sinful souls with God.

620 Mary is my Instructress, who is ever teaching me how to live for God. My spirit brightens up in Your gentleness and Your humility, O Mary.

621 On one occasion, when I dropped by the chapel for a five-minute adoration and was praying for a certain soul, I came to understand that God does not always accept our petitions for the souls we have in mind, but directs these to other souls. Hence, although we do not relieve the souls we intended to relieve in their purgatorial suffering, still our prayer is not lost.

622 **(81)** Intimate communion of a soul with God. God approaches a soul in a special way known only to Himself and to the soul. No one perceives this mysterious union. Love presides in this union, and everything is achieved by love alone. Jesus gives Himself to the soul in a gentle and sweet manner, and in His depths there is peace. He grants the soul many graces and makes it capable of sharing His eternal thoughts. And frequently, He reveals to it His divine plans.

623 Father Andrasz told me that it would be a good thing to have in God's Church a group of souls who would beg for His mercy, because in fact we are all in need of that mercy. After these words, an extraordinary light filled my soul. Oh, how good is the Lord!

624 **(82)** March 18, 1936. Once, I asked the Lord Jesus to take the first step

by bringing about some change or some external event, or by letting them expel me, as I found it impossible to leave the Congregation on my own initiative. And I was in an agony over this for more than three hours. I could not pray, but kept submitting my will to the will of God.

The next morning, Mother Superior [Borgia] told me that Mother General [Michael] was transferring me to Warsaw. I answered Mother that perhaps I should not go but leave [the Congregation] directly from here. I regarded this to be the external sign for which I had been asking God. Mother Superior made no reply, but after some time she called me again and said, “You know what, Sister: go anyway and don’t worry about wasting a trip, even if you should return immediately.” I answered, “All right, I will go,” although my heart was seized with pain because I knew **(83)** that by this trip this matter would be delayed. However, I try always to be obedient, despite everything.

625 In the evening, when I was praying, the Mother of God told me, *Your lives must be like Mine: quiet and hidden, in unceasing union with God, pleading for humanity and preparing the world for the second coming of God.*

626 In the evening, during Benediction, my soul was for some time in communion with God the Father. I felt I was in His hand like a little child, and I heard these words in my soul: **Do not fear anything, My daughter; all the adversaries will be shattered at My feet.** At these words, a deep peace and a great interior calm entered my soul.

627 **(84)** When I complained to the Lord that He was taking my help away and that I would be alone again and would not know what to do, I heard these words: **Do not be afraid; I am always with you.** After these words, a deep peace once again entered my soul. His presence penetrated me completely in a way that could be sensed. My spirit was flooded with light, and my body participated in this as well.

628 On the evening of the last day before my departure from Vilnius, an elderly sister^{[131](#)} revealed the condition of her soul to me. She said that she had already been suffering interiorly for several years, that it seemed to her that all her confessions had been bad, and that she had doubts as to whether the Lord Jesus had forgiven her. I asked her if she had ever told

her confessor about this. She answered that she had spoken many (85) times about this to her confessors and... “the confessors are always telling me to be at peace, but still I suffer very much, and nothing brings me relief, and it constantly seems to me that God has not forgiven me.” I answered, “You should obey your confessor, Sister, and be fully at peace, because this is certainly a temptation.”

But she entreated me with tears in her eyes to ask Jesus if He had forgiven her and whether her confessions had been good or not. I answered forcefully, “Ask Him yourself, Sister, if you don’t believe your confessors!” But she clutched my hand and did not want to let me go until I gave her an answer, and she kept asking me to pray for her and to let her know what Jesus would tell me about her. Crying bitterly, she would not let me go and said to me, “I know that the Lord Jesus speaks to you, Sister.” Since she was clutching my hand and I could not wrench myself away, I promised her (86) I would pray for her. In the evening, during Benediction, I heard these words in my soul: **Tell her that her disbelief wounds My heart more than the sins she committed.** When I told her this, she began to cry like a child, and great joy entered her soul. I understood that God wanted to console this soul through me. Even though it cost me a good deal, I fulfilled God’s wish.

629 When I entered the chapel for a moment that same evening, to thank God for all the graces He had bestowed on me in this house, suddenly God’s presence enveloped me. I felt like a child in the hands of the best of fathers, and I heard these words: **Do not fear anything. I am always with you.** His love penetrated my whole being. I felt I was entering into such close intimacy with Him that (87) I cannot find words to express it.

630 Then I saw one of the seven spirits near me, radiant as at other times, under a form of light. I constantly saw him beside me when I was riding on the train. I saw an angel standing on every church we passed, but surrounded by a light which was paler than that of the spirit who was accompanying me on the journey, and each of these spirits who were guarding the churches bowed his head to the spirit who was near me.

When I entered the convent gate at Warsaw, the spirit disappeared. I thanked God for His goodness, that He gives us angels for companions. Oh, how little people reflect on the fact that they always have beside

them such a guest, and at the same time a witness to everything! Remember, sinners, that you likewise have a witness to all your deeds.

631 O my Jesus, Your goodness surpasses all understanding, and no one will exhaust Your mercy. Damnation is for the **(88)** soul who wants to be damned; but for the one who desires salvation, there is the inexhaustible ocean of the Lord's mercy to draw from. How can a small vessel contain the unfathomable ocean?

632 As I was taking leave of the sisters and was about to depart, one of them¹³² apologized much to me for having helped me so little in my duties, and not only for having neglected to help me, but also for having tried to make things more difficult for me. However, in my own heart, I regarded her as a great benefactress, because she had exercised me in patience to such an extent that one of the elder sisters had once said, "Sister Faustina must be either a fool or a saint, for truly, an ordinary person would not tolerate having someone constantly do such things out of spite." However, I had **(89)** always approached her with good will. That particular sister had tried to make my work more difficult to the point that, despite my efforts, she had sometimes succeeded in spoiling what had been well done, as she herself admitted to me at our parting, and for which she begged my pardon. I had not wanted to probe her intentions, but took it as a trial from God...

633 I am greatly surprised at how one can be so jealous. When I see someone else's good, I rejoice at it as if it were mine. The joy of others is my joy, and the suffering of others is my suffering, for otherwise I would not dare to commune with the Lord Jesus. The spirit of Jesus is always simple, meek, sincere; all malice, envy, and unkindness disguised under a smile of good will are clever little devils. A severe word flowing from sincere love does not wound the heart.

634 **(90)** March 22, [1936]. When I arrived at Warsaw, I went into the small chapel for a moment to thank the Lord for a safe journey, and I asked the Lord to give me the assistance and the grace necessary for everything that was in store for me here. I submitted myself in all things to His holy will. I heard these words: **Fear nothing; all difficulties will serve for the fulfillment of My will.**

635 March 25. In the morning, during meditation, God's presence enveloped me in a special way, as I saw the immeasurable greatness of God and, at the same time, His condescension to His creatures. Then I saw the Mother of God, who said to me, *Oh, how pleasing to God is the soul that follows faithfully the inspirations of His grace! I gave the Savior to the world; as for you, you have to speak to the world about His great mercy and prepare the world for the Second (91) Coming of Him who will come, not as a merciful Savior, but as a just Judge. Oh, how terrible is that day! Determined is the day of justice, the day of divine wrath. The angels tremble before it. Speak to souls about this great mercy while it is still the time for [granting] mercy. If you keep silent now, you will be answering for a great number of souls on that terrible day. Fear nothing. Be faithful to the end. I sympathize with you.*

636 When I arrived at Walendow, one of the sisters¹³³ gave me this welcome: "Sister, now that you have come to us here, everything is going to be all right." I said to her, "Why do you say that, Sister?" She answered that she felt this in her soul. This particular person is full of simplicity and very pleasing to the Heart of Jesus. The house really was in dire straits [financially]. ...I shall not mention all of that here.

637 (92) Confession. As I was preparing for confession, I said to Jesus, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, "Jesus, I beg You to speak to me through the mouth of this priest. And this will be a sign to me, because he does not know at all that You want me to establish that Congregation of Mercy. Let him say something to me about this mercy."

When I approached the confessional and started my confession, the priest interrupted me and started telling me about the great mercy of God, and he spoke more forcefully about it than I had ever heard anyone speak before. And he asked me, "Do you know that the mercy of the Lord is greater than all His works, that it is the crown of His works?" And I listened attentively to these words which the Lord was speaking through the mouth of the priest. Although I believe that it is always God who speaks through the lips of the priest in the confessional, I experienced it in a special way on that occasion. (93)

Although I did not reveal anything of the divine life which is in my soul and only accused myself of my offenses, the priest himself told me very

much of what was in my soul and put me under obligation to be faithful to the inspirations of God. He said to me, "You are going through life with the Mother of God, who faithfully responded to every divine inspiration." O my Jesus, who can ever comprehend Your goodness?

638 Jesus, drive away from me the thoughts that are not in accord with Your will. I know that nothing now binds me to this earth but this work of mercy.

639 Thursday. During the evening adoration, I saw Jesus scourged and tortured. He said to me, **My daughter, I desire that even in the smallest things, you rely on your confessor. Your greatest sacrifices do not please Me if you practice them without the confessor's (94) permission; on the other hand, the smallest sacrifice finds great value in My eyes, if it is done with his permission. The greatest works are worthless in My eyes if they are done out of self-will, and often they are not in accord with My will and merit punishment rather than reward. And on the other hand, even the smallest of your acts, done with the confessor's permission is pleasing in My eyes and very dear to Me. Hold firmly to this always. Be constantly on the watch, for many souls will turn back from the gates of hell and worship My mercy. But fear nothing, as I am with you. Know that of yourself you can do nothing.**

640 On the First Friday of the month, before Communion, I saw a large ciborium (95) filled with sacred hosts. A hand placed the ciborium in front of me, and I took it in my hands. There were a thousand living hosts inside. Then I heard a voice, **These are hosts which have been received by the souls for whom you have obtained the grace of true conversion during this Lent.** That was a week before Good Friday. I spent the day in great interior recollection, emptying myself for the sake of souls.

641 Oh, what joy it is to empty myself for the sake of immortal souls! I know that the grain of wheat must be destroyed and ground between millstones in order to become food. In the same way, I must become destroyed in order to be useful to the Church and souls, even though exteriorly no one will notice my sacrifice. O Jesus, outwardly I want to be hidden, just like this little wafer wherein the eye perceives nothing, and yet I am a host consecrated to You.

642 **(96)** Palm Sunday. This Sunday, I experienced in a special way the sentiments of the most sweet Heart of Jesus. My spirit was there where Jesus was. I saw Jesus riding on a donkey's foal, and the disciples and a great multitude with branches in their hands joyfully accompanying the Lord Jesus. Some strewed them before His feet where He was riding, while others raised their branches in the air, leaping and jumping before the Lord and not knowing what to do for joy. And I saw another crowd which came out to meet Jesus, likewise with joyful faces and with branches in their hands, and they were crying out unceasingly with joy. There were little children there also. But Jesus was very grave, and the Lord gave me to know how much He was suffering at the time. And at that moment, I saw nothing but only Jesus, whose Heart was saturated with ingratitude.

643 **(97)** Quarterly confession. Father Bukowski. When some inner force urged me again not to put off this matter, I was unable to find peace. I told the confessor, Father Bukowski, that I could not wait any longer. Father answered me, "Sister, this is an illusion. The Lord Jesus cannot be demanding this. You have made your perpetual vows. All this is an illusion. You are inventing some sort of heresy!" And he was shouting at me, almost at the top of his voice. I asked him whether all of this was an illusion, and He said, "Everything." "Then please tell me what course I must take." "Well, Sister, you must not follow any inspiration. You should get your mind off all this. You should pay no attention to what you hear in your soul and try to carry out your exterior duties well. Give no thought to these things and put them completely out of your mind." I answered, "Good, **(98)** up to now, I have been following my conscience, but now that you direct me, Father, to pay no heed to my interior, I will cease to do so." Then he said, "If the Lord Jesus tells you something again, please let me know, but you must take no action." I answered, "Very well; I will try to be obedient." I do not know why Father was being so severe.

644 When I left the confessional, a multitude of thoughts oppressed my soul. Why be sincere? What I have told is no sin, so I have no duty to tell it to the confessor. And again, what a relief that I do not have to heed my interior any more as long as things are all right on the outside. I do not have to pay attention to anything or to follow the inner voices that have

often cost me so much humiliation. From now on, I will be free. And again, **(99)** a strange pain seized my soul: can I not, then, commune with the One whom I desire so greatly? The One who is the whole strength of my soul? I began to cry out, “To whom shall I go, O Jesus?” But from the moment of the confessor’s prohibition, great darkness fell upon my soul. I feared lest I hear some inner voice, which would occasion the breaking of my confessor’s prohibition. And then again, I die of longing for God. My interior is torn asunder, not having any will of its own, since it has been turned over completely to God.

That was on Wednesday of Holy Week. The suffering intensified on Holy Thursday. When I came to make my meditation, I entered into a kind of agony. I did not feel the presence of God, but all the justice of God weighed heavily upon me. I saw myself as if knocked down for the sins of the world. Satan began to mock me, “See, now you will no longer strive to win souls; look how you’ve been paid! Nobody will **(100)** believe you that Jesus demands this. See how much you are suffering now, and how much more you are going to suffer! After all, the confessor has now released you from all these things.” Now I can live as I like, as long as things are all right outwardly. These dreadful thoughts tormented me throughout the whole hour.

When it was almost time for Holy Mass, my heart was seized with pain; am I, then, to leave the Congregation? And since Father has told me that this is a kind of heresy, am I to fall away from the Church? I cried out to the Lord with a sorrowful interior cry, “Jesus, save me!” Still, not a single ray of light entered my soul, and I felt my strength failing, as if the body were separating itself from the soul. I submitted to the will of God and repeated, “O God, let whatever You have decided upon happen to me. Nothing in me is any longer my own.” Then, suddenly, God’s presence enveloped me and penetrated me through and through. **(101)** This was just as I was receiving Holy Communion. A moment after Holy Communion, I lost all awareness of everything around me and of my whereabouts.

645 Then I saw the Lord Jesus, as He is represented in the image, and He said to me, **Tell the confessor that this work is Mine and that I am using you as a lowly instrument.** And I said, “Jesus, I can no longer do

anything You command me to do, because my confessor has told me that all this is an illusion, and that I am not allowed to obey any of Your commands. I will do nothing that You will tell me to do now. I am sorry, my Lord, but I am not allowed to do anything, and I must obey my confessor. Jesus, I most earnestly ask Your pardon. You know how much I suffer because of this, but it can't be helped, Jesus. The confessor has forbidden me to follow Your orders." Jesus listened to my arguments and complaints with kindness and satisfaction. I thought (102) the Lord Jesus would be grievously offended but, on the contrary, He was pleased and said to me kindly, **Always tell your confessor about everything I say to you and command you to do, and do only that for which you obtain permission. Do not be upset, and fear nothing; I am with you.** My soul was filled with joy, and all those oppressive thoughts vanished. Certitude and courage entered my soul.

646 But after a short while, I entered into the sufferings which Jesus underwent in the Garden of Olives. This lasted until Friday morning. On Friday, I experienced the Passion of Jesus but, this time, in a different way. On that day, Father Bukowski came from Derdy. Some strange power pushed me to go to confession and tell him about everything that had happened to me and about what Jesus had said to me. When I told Father, he was quite different and he said (103) to me, "Sister, don't be afraid of anything; you will come to no harm, for the Lord Jesus will not allow it. If you are obedient and persevere in this disposition, you need not worry about anything. God will find a way to bring about His work. You should always have this simplicity and sincerity and tell everything to Mother General. What I said to you was said as a warning, because illusions may afflict even holy persons, and Satan's insinuations may play a part in this, and sometimes this comes from our own selves, so one has to be careful. And so continue as you have thus far. You can see, Sister, that the Lord is not angered by this. And Sister, you can repeat these things that have happened to you at present to your regular confessor [Father Sopocko]."

647 From this, I came to understand one thing: that I must pray much for each of my confessors, that he might obtain the light of the Holy (104) Spirit, for when I approach the confessional without first praying fervently, the confessor does not understand me very well. Father

encouraged me to pray fervently for these intentions, that God would give better knowledge and understanding of the things He is asking of me. “Make novena after novena, Sister, and God will not refuse the graces.”

648 Good Friday. At three o’clock, I saw the Lord Jesus, crucified, who looked at me and said, **I thirst**. Then I saw two rays issue from His side, just as they appear in the image. I then felt in my soul the desire to save souls and to empty myself for the sake of poor sinners. I offered myself, together with the dying Jesus, to the Eternal Father, for the salvation of the whole world. With Jesus, through Jesus **(105)** and in Jesus is my communion with You, Eternal Father. On Good Friday, Jesus suffered in His soul in a way which was different from [His suffering on] Holy Thursday.

649 Mass of the Resurrection. [April 12, 1936]. When I entered the chapel, my spirit was immersed in God, its only treasure. His presence flooded me.

650 O my Jesus, my Master and Director, strengthen and enlighten me in these difficult moments of my life. I expect no help from people; all my hope is in You. I feel alone in the face of Your demands, O Lord. Despite the fears and qualms of my nature, I am fulfilling Your holy will and desire to fulfill it as faithfully as possible throughout my life and in my death. Jesus, with You I can do all things. Do with me as You please; only give me Your merciful Heart and that is enough for me.

(106) O Jesus my Lord, help me. Let what You have planned before all ages happen to me. I am ready at each beckoning of Your holy will. Enlighten my mind that I may know Your will. O God, You who pervade my soul, You know that I desire nothing but Your glory.

O Divine Will, You are the delight of my heart, the food of my soul, the light of my intellect, the omnipotent strength of my will; for when I unite myself with Your will, O Lord, Your power works through me and takes the place of my feeble will. Each day, I seek to carry out God’s wishes.

651 O Incomprehensible God, how great is Your mercy! It surpasses the combined understanding of all men and angels. All the angels **(107)** and all humans have emerged from the very depths of Your tender mercy.

Mercy is the flower of love. God is love, and mercy is His deed. In love it is conceived; in mercy it is revealed. Everything I look at speaks to me of God's mercy. Even God's very justice speaks to me about His fathomless mercy, because justice flows from love.

652 There is one word I heed and continually ponder; it alone is everything to me; I live by it and die by it, and it is the holy will of God. It is my daily food. My whole soul listens intently to God's wishes. I do always what God asks of me, although my nature often quakes and I feel that the magnitude of these things is beyond my strength. I know well what I am of myself, but I also know what the grace of God is, which supports me.

653 **(108)** April 25, 1936. Walendow. On that day, the suffering in my soul was more severe than ever before. From early morning, I felt as if my body and soul had separated. I felt that God's presence had penetrated my whole being; I felt all the justice of God within me; I felt I stood alone before God. I thought: one word from my spiritual director would set me entirely at peace; but what can I do? — he is not here. However, I decided to seek light in holy confession. When I uncovered my soul to the priest,^{[134](#)} he was afraid to continue hearing my confession, and that caused me even greater suffering. When I see that a priest is fearful, I do not obtain any inner peace. So I have decided that only to my spiritual director will I open my soul in all matters, from the greatest to the least, and that I will follow his directions strictly.

654 Now I understand that confession is only the confessing **(109)** of one's sins, and spiritual guidance is a different thing altogether. But this is not what I want to speak about. I want to tell about a strange thing that happened to me for the first time. When the confessor started talking to me, I did not understand a single word. Then I saw Jesus Crucified and He said to me, **It is in My Passion that you must seek light and strength.** After the confession, I meditated on Jesus' terrible Passion, and I understood that what I was suffering was nothing compared to the Savior's Passion, and that even the smallest imperfection was the cause of this terrible suffering. Then my soul was filled with very great contrition, and only then I sensed that I was in the sea of the unfathomable mercy of God. Oh, how few words I have to express what I am experiencing! I feel I am like a drop of dew engulfed in the depths of

the bottomless ocean of divine mercy.

655 **(110)** + May 11, 1936. I came to Cracow. I was happy that at last I shall be able to carry out all that the Lord Jesus was demanding.

Once, when I was speaking with Father A.... [Andrasz] and had told him everything, I received this answer: "Sister, pray till the day of the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart and add some mortification to the prayer, and on the Feast of the Sacred Heart I will give you an answer." But one day, I heard this voice in my soul: **Fear nothing; I am with you.** After these words, I felt such an urgency within me that, without waiting for the Feast of the Sacred Heart, I said during confession that I was going to leave the Congregation immediately. Father answered, "Sister, since you have made the decision by yourself, then take the responsibility for yourself. Go." I was happy to be leaving.

The following morning, God's presence suddenly left me. **(111)** A great darkness came over my soul. I could not pray. Because of this sudden loss of the presence of God, I decided to postpone the matter for a while, until I had talked with Father.

Father A. [Andrasz] answered that such changes in souls were frequent, and that this was not an obstacle to action.

656 When I talked to Mother General [Michael] about everything that had happened to me, she said, "Sister, I am locking you in the tabernacle with the Lord Jesus; wherever you go from there, that will be the will of God."

657 June 19. When we went to the Jesuits' place for the procession of the Sacred Heart, during Vespers I saw the same rays coming forth from the Sacred Host, just as they are painted in the image. My soul was filled with great longing for God.

(112) June, 1936. Conversation with Father A. [Andrasz]

658 "Know that these are hard and difficult things. Your principal spiritual director is the Holy Spirit. We can only give direction to these inspirations, but your real director is the Holy Spirit. If you yourself have decided to leave, Sister, I neither prohibit nor order you to do so. You take the responsibility for yourself. I say this to you, Sister: you can begin

to take action. You are capable of doing so, and therefore you can do so. These things are indeed probable; all you have told me up to now [before perpetual vows in Cracow in 1933] speaks in favor of taking action. Still, you have to be very careful in all this. Pray much and ask that I be given light.”

659 During Holy Mass, offered by Father Andrasz, I saw the little Infant Jesus, who told me that I was to depend on him for everything; **No action undertaken on your own, even though you (113) put much effort into it, pleases Me.** I understood this [need of] dependence.

660 O my Jesus, on the day of the last judgment, You will demand from me an account of this work of mercy. O Just Judge, but my Spouse as well, help me to do Your holy will. O mercy, O divine virtue!

O most merciful Heart of Jesus, my Betrothed, make my heart like unto Yours.

661 July 16. I spent this whole night in prayer. I meditated upon the Lord’s Passion, and my soul was crushed by the burden of God’s justice. The Hand of the Lord touched me.

662 July 17. O my Jesus, You know how much adversity I encounter in this matter, how much reproach I must put up with, how many ironic smiles I must take with equanimity. Oh, alone I would not **(114)** be able to survive this, but with You, my Master, I can do all things. Oh, how painfully an ironic smile wounds, especially when one [appears to] speak with great sincerity.

663 July 22. O my Jesus, I know that a person’s greatness is evidenced by his deeds and not by his words or feelings. It is the works that have come from us that will speak about us. My Jesus, do not allow me to daydream, but give me the courage and strength to fulfill Your holy will.

Jesus, if You wish to leave me in uncertainty, even to the end of my life, may Your Holy Name be blessed.

June.

664 + O my Jesus, how immensely I rejoice at the assurance You have given

me that the Congregation will come into being. I no longer have the least shadow of a doubt about this, and I see how great is the glory which it will give to God. It will be the reflection of God's greatest attribute; that is, His divine mercy. Unceasingly, **(115)** they will intercede for divine mercy for themselves and for the whole world. And every act of mercy will flow from God's love, that love with which they will be filled to overflowing. They will strive to make their own this great attribute of God, and to live by it and to bring others to know it and to trust in the goodness of the Lord. This Congregation of Divine Mercy will be in God's Church like a beehive in a magnificent garden, hidden and meek. The sisters will work like bees to feed their neighbors' souls with honey, while the wax will flame for the glory of God.

+ June 29, 1936.

665 Father Andrasz told me to make a novena for the intention of knowing better the will of God. I prayed ardently, adding a certain bodily mortification. Towards the end of the novena. I received an inner light and the assurance that the Congregation will come into being and that it is pleasing to God. Despite the difficulties **(116)** and adversities, complete peace and strength entered my soul from on high. I understood that nothing could resist or nullify the will of God. I understood that I must carry out this will of God despite obstacles, persecution and sufferings of all kinds, and despite natural repugnance and fear.

666 I understood that all striving for perfection and all sanctity consist in doing God's will. Perfect fulfillment of God's will is maturity in sanctity; there is no room for doubt here. To receive God's light and recognize what God wants of us and yet not do it is a great offense against the majesty of God. Such a soul deserves to be completely forsaken by God. It resembles Lucifer, who had great light, but did not do God's will. An extraordinary peace entered my soul when I reflected on the fact that, despite great difficulties, I had always faithfully followed God's will **(117)** as I knew it. O Jesus, grant me the grace to put Your will into practice as I have come to know it, O God.

667 July 14. I received a letter at three o'clock [from Father Sopocko¹³⁵]. O Jesus, You alone know what I suffer, but I will keep silent and will not say anything about it to any creature, because I know that no one will

comfort me. You are everything to me, O God, and Your holy will is my nourishment. I am living now on what I will live on in eternity.

I have great reverence for Saint Michael the Archangel; he had no example to follow in doing the will of God, and yet he fulfilled God's will faithfully.

668 + July 15. During Holy Mass, I offered myself completely to the heavenly Father through the sweetest Heart of Jesus; let Him do as He pleases with me. Of myself I am nothing, and in my misery I have nothing of worth; so I abandon myself into the ocean of Your mercy, O Lord.

669 **(118)** July 16. I am learning how to be good from Jesus, from Him who is goodness itself, so that I may be called a daughter of the heavenly Father. This morning, when someone hurt my feelings, I tried, in that suffering, to unite my will to the will of God, and I praised God by my silence. In the afternoon, I went for a five-minute adoration, when suddenly I saw the crucifix I have on my breast come alive. Jesus said to me, **My daughter, suffering will be a sign to you that I am with you.** My soul was greatly moved by these words.

670 O Jesus, my Master and my Director, it is only with You that I can converse. With no one else is it so easy to talk as with You, O God.

671 In my spiritual life, I will always hold on to the priest's hand. About my soul's life and its needs, I will speak only with my confessor.

672 **(119)** + August 4, 1936. Inner torment for more than two hours. Agony.... Suddenly, God's presence pervades me and I feel as though I am coming under the power of the just God. His justice pervades me to the marrow; outwardly I lose strength and consciousness. With this, I come to know the great holiness of God and my own great misery. A great torment afflicts my soul; the soul perceives its deeds to be not without blemish. Then the strength of trust is awakened in the soul, which longs for God with all its might. Yet it sees how miserable it is and what utter vanity everything that surrounds it. And face to face with such holiness, Oh, poor soul....

August 13.

673 I was tormented by terrible temptations all day; blasphemies thrust themselves upon my lips, and I felt an aversion for everything that is holy and godlike. Yet I struggled throughout the day. In the evening, my mind became oppressed: what's the use of telling this to the confessor? **(120)** He will ridicule it. A feeling of aversion and discouragement filled my soul, and it seemed to me that I could by no means receive Holy Communion in that condition. At the thought of not receiving Communion, such a terrible pain seized my soul that I almost cried aloud in the chapel. But I suddenly realized that the sisters were there and decided to go to the garden and hide myself there so as to be able to at least cry out loud. Then suddenly, Jesus stood by me and said, **Where are you intending to go?**

674 I gave no answer to Jesus, but poured out all my sorrow before Him, and Satan's attempts ceased. Jesus then said to me, **The inner peace that you have is a grace**, and suddenly He was gone. I felt happy and unaccountably peaceful. Really, for so much peace to return within a moment — that is a thing only Jesus can do, He, the most high Lord.

675 **(121)** + August 7, 1936.

When I received the article¹³⁶ about Divine Mercy with the image [on the cover], God's presence filled me in an extraordinary way. When I steeped myself in a prayer of thanksgiving, I suddenly saw the Lord Jesus in a great brightness, just as He is painted, and at His feet I saw Father Andrasz and Father Sopocko. Both were holding pens in their hands, and flashes of light and fire, like lightning, were coming from the tips of their pens and striking a great crowd of people who were hurrying I know not where. Whoever was touched by the ray of light immediately turned his back on the crowd and held out his hands to Jesus. Some returned with great joy, others with great pain and compunction. Jesus was looking at both priests with great kindness. After a while, I was left alone with Jesus, and I said, "Jesus, take me now, for Your will has already been accomplished." And Jesus answered, **(122) My will has not yet been completely accomplished in you; you will still suffer much, but I am with you; do not fear.**

676 I have been talking much with the Lord about Father Andrasz and also about Father Sopocko. I know that whatever I ask of the Lord He will not

refuse me, and He will give them that for which I ask. I sensed and I know how greatly Jesus loves them. I am not writing about this in detail, but I know this, and it makes me very happy.

August 15, 1936.

677 During a Mass celebrated by Father Andrasz, a moment before the Elevation, God's presence pervaded my soul, which was drawn to the altar. Then I saw the Mother of God with the Infant Jesus. The Infant Jesus was holding onto the hand of Our Lady. A moment later, the Infant Jesus ran with joy to the center of the altar, and the Mother of God said to me, *See with what assurance I entrust Jesus into his hands. In the same way, you are to (123) entrust your soul and be like a child to him.*

— After these words, my soul was filled with unusual trust. The Mother of God was clothed in a white dress, strangely white, transparent; on Her shoulders She had a transparent blue; that is, a blue-like mantle; with uncovered head [and] flowing hair, She was exquisite, and inconceivably beautiful. She was looking at Father with great tenderness, but after a moment, He broke up this beautiful Child, and living blood flowed forth. Father bent forward and received the true and living Jesus into himself. Had he eaten Him? I do not know how this took place. Jesus, Jesus, I cannot keep up with You, for in an instant, You become incomprehensible to me.

678 The essence of the virtues is the will of God. He who does the will of God faithfully, practices all the virtues. In all the events and circumstances of my life, I adore and bless the holy will of God. The holy will of God is the object of my love. (124) In the most secret depths of my soul, I live according to His will. I act exteriorly according to what I recognize inwardly as the will of God. Sweeter to me are the torments, sufferings, persecutions, and all manner of adversities by divine will than popularity, praise, and esteem by my own will.

679 Good night, my Jesus; the bell is calling me to sleep. My Jesus, You see that I am dying from the desire to save souls. Good night, my Beloved; I rejoice at being one day closer to eternity. And if You let me wake up tomorrow, Jesus, I shall begin a new hymn to Your praise.

680 + July 13. During meditation today, I came to understand that I should never speak about my own interior experiences, [but] that I should conceal nothing from my spiritual director; and I will especially ask God to enlighten my spiritual **(125)** director. I attach greater importance to the words of my confessor than to all the lights taken together that I receive interiorly.

681 + Amid the greatest torments, I fix the gaze of my soul upon Jesus Crucified; I do not expect help from people, but place my trust in God. In His unfathomable mercy lies all my hope.

682 + The more I feel that God is transforming me, the more I desire to immerse myself in silence. The love of God is doing its work in the depths of my soul. I see that the mission which the Lord has entrusted to me is beginning.

683 + Once, when I was praying fervently to the Jesuit Saints, I suddenly saw my Guardian Angel, who led me before the throne of God. I passed **(126)** through great hosts of saints, and I recognized many of them, whom I knew from their pictures. I saw many Jesuits, who asked me from what congregation I was. When I answered they asked, "Who is your spiritual director?" I answered that it was Father A.... When they wanted to say more, my Guardian Angel beckoned me to be silent, and I came before the throne of God. I saw a great and inaccessible light, and I saw a place destined for me, close to God. But what it was like I do not know, because a cloud covered it. However, my Guardian Angel said to me, "Here is your throne, for your faithfulness in fulfilling the will of God."

684 + Holy Hour. — Thursday. During this hour of prayer, Jesus allowed me to enter the Cenacle, and I was a witness to what happened there. However, I was most deeply moved when, before the Consecration, Jesus raised **(127)** His eyes to heaven and entered into a mysterious conversation with His Father. It is only in eternity that we shall really understand that moment. His eyes were like two flames; His face was radiant, white as snow; His whole personage full of majesty, His soul full of longing. At the moment of Consecration, love rested satiated — the sacrifice fully consummated. Now only the external ceremony of death will be carried out — external destruction; the essence [of it] is in the

Cenacle. Never in my whole life had I understood this mystery so profoundly as during that hour of adoration. Oh, how ardently I desire that the whole world would come to know this unfathomable mystery!

685 After the Holy Hour, when I went to my cell, I suddenly learned how greatly God was offended by a certain person, who was close to my heart. At the sight of this, my soul was pierced with pain, and I cast myself in the dust before the Lord, begging His mercy. For two hours, in tears, prayer and flagellation I prevented **(128)** the sin, and I learned that God's mercy had embraced that poor soul. Oh, the price of one single sin!

686 + September. First Friday. In the evening, I saw the Mother of God, with Her breast bared and pierced with a sword. She was shedding bitter tears and shielding us against God's terrible punishment. God wants to inflict terrible punishment on us, but He cannot because the Mother of God is shielding us. Horrible fear seized my soul. I kept praying incessantly for Poland, for my dear Poland, which is so lacking in gratitude for the Mother of God. If it were not for the Mother of God, all our efforts would be of little use. I intensified my prayers and sacrifices for our dear native land, but I see that I am a drop before the wave of evil. How can a drop stop a wave: O yes! A drop is nothing of itself, but with You, Jesus, I shall stand up bravely to the whole wave of evil and even **(129)** to the whole of hell. Your omnipotence can do all things.

687 Once, as I was going down the hall to the kitchen, I heard these words in my soul: **Say unceasingly the chaplet that I have taught you. Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. Priests will recommend it to sinners as their last hope of salvation. Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this chaplet only once, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy. I desire that the whole world know My infinite mercy. I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in My mercy.**

688 Jesus, Life and Truth, my Master, guide every step of my life, that I may act according to Your holy will.

689 **(130)** + On one occasion, I saw the throne of the Lamb of God and before the throne three Saints: Stanislaus Kostka, Andrew Bobola and Prince Casimir, who were interceding for Poland. All at once I saw a

large book which stands before the throne, and it was given to me to read. The book was written in blood. Still, I could not read anything but the name, Jesus. Then I heard a voice which said to me, **Your hour has not yet come.** Then the book was taken away from me, and I heard these words: **You will bear witness to My infinite mercy. In this book are written the names of the souls that have glorified My mercy.** I was overwhelmed with joy at the sight of such great goodness of God.

690 + On one occasion, I came to know of the condition of two religious sisters who were grumbling interiorly about an order the Superior had given them, and for this reason God had withheld many special graces from them. **(131)** My heart ached at this sight. How sad it is, O Jesus, when we ourselves are the cause of the loss of graces. Whoever understands this is always faithful.

691 + Thursday. Although I was very tired today, I nevertheless resolved to make a Holy Hour. I could not pray, nor could I remain kneeling, but I remained in prayer for a whole hour and united myself in spirit with those souls who are already worshiping God in the perfect way. But towards the end of the hour, I suddenly saw Jesus, who looked at me penetratingly and said with ineffable sweetness, **Your prayer is extremely pleasing to Me.** After these words, an unusual power and spiritual joy entered my soul. God's presence continued to pervade my soul. Oh, what happens to a soul that meets the Lord face to face, no pen has ever expressed or ever will express!

692 **(132)** + O Jesus, I understand that Your mercy is beyond all imagining, and therefore I ask You to make my heart so big that there will be room in it for the needs of all the souls living on the face of the earth. O Jesus, my love extends beyond the world, to the souls suffering in purgatory, and I want to exercise mercy toward them by means of indulgenced prayers. God's mercy is unfathomable and inexhaustible, just as God Himself is unfathomable. Even if I were to use the strongest words there are to express this mercy of God, all this would be nothing in comparison with what it is in reality. O Jesus, make my heart sensitive to all the sufferings of my neighbor, whether of body or of soul. O my Jesus, I know that You act toward us as we act toward our neighbor.

My Jesus, make my heart like unto Your merciful Heart. Jesus, help me

to go through life doing good to everyone.

693 (133) September 14, [1936]. The Archbishop [Jalbrzykowski] of Vilnius visited us. Although he stayed with us for a very short time, I still had a chance to talk with this worthy priest about the work of mercy. He showed himself very favorably disposed to this cause of mercy: “Sister, be completely at peace; if this is within the plans of divine providence, it will come about. In the meantime, Sister, pray for a clearer outward sign. Let the Lord Jesus give you a clearer knowledge of this. I beg you to wait a little while longer. The Lord Jesus will arrange the circumstances in such a way that everything will turn out all right.”

694 September 19, 1936. When we left the doctor’s¹³⁷ [office] and stepped into the sanatorium chapel for a moment, I heard these words in my soul: **My child, just a few more drops in your chalice; it won’t be long now.** Joy (134) filled my soul; this was the first call from my beloved Spouse and Master. My heart melted, and there was a moment when my soul was immersed in the whole sea of God’s mercy. I felt that my mission was beginning in all its fullness. Death destroys nothing that is good. I pray most of all for souls that are experiencing inner sufferings.

695 Once, I received light concerning two sisters. I understood that it is not possible for a person to act in the same manner towards everyone. There are some people who have a strange way of making friends with others. And then, as friends and under the pretext of that friendship, they manage to draw the person out, word by word. Then, when the right moment comes, they use those very same words to hurt that person. My Jesus, how strange is human frailty! Your love, Jesus, gives the soul this great prudence in its dealings with others.

696 (135) + September 24, 1936.

Mother Superior [Irene] ordered me to say one decade of the rosary in place of all the other exercises, and to go to bed at once. As soon as I lay down I fell asleep, for I was very tired. But a while later, I was awakened by suffering. It was such a great suffering that it prevented me from making even the slightest movement; I could not even swallow my saliva. This lasted for about three hours. I thought of waking up the novice sister¹³⁸ who shared my room, but then I thought, “She cannot give me

any help, so let her sleep. It would be a pity to wake her.” I resigned myself completely to the will of God and thought that the day of my death, so much desired, had come. It was an occasion for me to unite myself with Jesus, suffering on the Cross. Beyond that, I was unable to pray. When the suffering ceased, I began **(136)** to perspire. But I still could not move, as the pain would return at each attempt. In the morning, I felt very tired, though I felt no further physical pain. Still, I could not get up to attend Mass. I thought to myself, if after such suffering death does not come, then how great the sufferings of death must be!

697 Jesus, You know that I love suffering and want to drain the cup of suffering to the last drop; and yet, my nature experienced a slight shudder and fear. Quickly, however, my trust in the infinite mercy of God was awakened in all its force, and everything else had to give way before it, like a shadow retreating before the sun’s rays. O Jesus, how great is Your goodness! Your infinite goodness, so well known to me, enables me to bravely look death itself in the eye. I know that nothing will happen to me without God’s permission. I desire to glorify Your infinite mercy during my life, at the hour of death, in the resurrection and throughout eternity.

(137) + My Jesus, my strength, my peace, my repose; my soul bathes daily in the rays of Your mercy. There is not a moment in my life when I do not experience Your mercy, O God. I count on nothing in my whole life, but only on Your infinite mercy. It is the guiding thread of my life, O Lord. My soul is filled with God’s mercy.

698 + Oh, how sorely Jesus is hurt by the ingratitude of a chosen soul! What a martyrdom it is for His unspeakable love! God loves us with the entire infinite Being that He is; and imagine, a miserable particle of dust scorns that love! My heart bursts with pain when I see this ingratitude.

699 On one occasion, I heard these words: **My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable (138) mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy¹³⁹ be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and**

punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. (139) It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy.

700 + Once, when I was very tired and in much pain, I told Mother Superior [Irene] about it and received the answer that I should get used to suffering. I listened to everything that Mother told me, and then I went out. Our Mother Superior has great love of neighbor and especially great love for the sick sisters, as everyone knows. And yet, as regards me, it is extraordinary that the Lord Jesus has permitted that she not understand me and that she test me much in this respect.

701 On this particular day, when I was feeling so bad and still went to work, every now and then I would feel sick. It was so very hot that, even without working, a person felt terrible, **(140)** not to mention what it was like when one had to work while suffering. So, before noon, I straightened up from my work, looked up to the sky with great trust and said to the Lord, "Jesus, cover the sun, for I cannot stand this heat any longer." And, O wonder, at that very moment a white cloud covered the sun and, from then on, the heat became less intense. When a little while later I began to reproach myself that I did not bear the heat, but begged for relief, Jesus Himself put me at ease.

702 August 13, 1936. Tonight God's presence is pervading me, and in an instant I come to know the great holiness of God. Oh, how the greatness of God overwhelms me! I then come to know the whole depth of my nothingness. This is a great torment, for this knowledge is followed by love. The soul bounds forward vehemently toward God, and the two loves come face to face: the Creator and the creature; **(141)** one little drop seeks to measure itself with the ocean. At first, the little drop wants to enclose the infinite ocean within itself; but at the same moment, it knows

itself to be just one small drop, and thus it is vanquished, and it passes completely into God like a drop into the ocean. At first, this moment is a torment, but so sweet that, on experiencing it, the soul is happy.

703 At present, the topic of my particular examen is my union with the Merciful Christ. This practice gives me unusual strength; my heart is always united with the One it desires, and its actions are regulated by mercy, which flows from love.

704 I spend every free moment at the feet of the hidden God. He is my Master; I ask Him about everything; I speak to Him about everything. Here I obtain strength and light; here I learn everything; here I am given light on how to act toward my neighbor. From the time **(142)** I left the novitiate, I have enclosed myself in the tabernacle together with Jesus, my Master. He Himself drew me into the fire of living love on which everything converges.

705 September 25. I suffer great pain in my hands, feet and side, the places where Jesus' body was pierced. I experience these pains particularly when I meet with a soul who is not in the state of grace. Then I pray fervently that the mercy of God will embrace that soul.

706 [September] 29. On the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, I saw by my side that great Leader, who spoke these words to me: "The Lord has ordered me to take special care of you. Know that you are hated by evil; but do not fear — 'Who is like God!' " And he disappeared. But I feel his presence and assistance.

707 **(143)** October 2, 1936. The First Friday of the month. After Holy Communion, I suddenly saw the Lord Jesus, who spoke these words to me: **Now I know that it is not for the graces or gifts that you love me, but because My will is dearer to you than life. That is why I am uniting Myself with you so intimately as with no other creature.**

708 At that moment, Jesus disappeared. My soul was filled with the presence of God. I know that the gaze of the Mighty One rests upon me. I plunged myself completely in the joy that flows from God. I continued throughout the whole day without interruption, thus immersed in God. In the evening, I fell as if into a faint and a strange sort of agony. My love wants

to equal the love of the Mighty One. It is drawn to Him so vehemently that it is impossible, without some special grace from God, to bear the vastness of such a grace in this life. But I see clearly that Jesus Himself is sustaining me and strengthening me and making me capable of communing with Him. In all this, the soul is particularly active.

709 **(144)** October 3, 1936. During the rosary today, I suddenly saw a ciborium with the Blessed Sacrament. The ciborium was uncovered and quite filled with hosts. From the ciborium came a voice: **These hosts have been received by souls converted through your prayer and suffering.** At this point, I felt God's presence as a child would; I felt strangely like a child.

710 When one day I felt I would be unable to carry on till nine and asked S.N.¹⁴⁰ for something to eat, because I was going to bed earlier as I was not feeling well, S.N. answered, "But you are not ill, Sister; they only wanted you to have some rest, so they made up the illness." O my Jesus, my illness is so far advanced¹⁴¹ that the doctor has separated me from the sisters to prevent them from becoming infected, and yet one is judged in this way. But that's good; all this is for You, my Jesus. I do not want to write much about external matters, for they are not the reason for my writing; **(145)** I want in particular to note the graces granted me by the Lord, because these are not only for me, but for many other souls as well.

711 October 5, [1936]. Today I received a letter from Father Sopocko. I learned that he intends to publish a holy card of the Merciful Christ. He asked me to send him a certain prayer¹⁴² which he wants to put on the back, if he receives the Archbishop's approbation. Oh, what great joy fills my heart that God has let me see this work of His mercy! How great is this work of the Most High God! I am but His instrument. Oh, how ardently I desire to see this Feast of the Divine Mercy which God is demanding through me. But if it is the will of God that it be celebrated solemnly only after my death, even so I rejoice in it already, and I celebrate it interiorly with my confessor's permission.

712 **(146)** + I saw Father Andrasz today, kneeling and engulfed in prayer, and suddenly Jesus stood by him and, holding out both hands over his head, He said to me: — **He will lead you through; do not fear.**

713 October 11. This evening, as I was writing about this great mercy of God and its great advantage to souls, Satan rushed into my room with great anger and fury. He seized the screen and began to break and crush it. I was a little frightened at first, but I immediately made the sign of the cross with my little crucifix, and the beast fell quiet and disappeared at once. Today, I did not see this hideous figure but only his anger. Satan's anger is terrible, and yet the screen was not shattered or broken, and I went on writing quietly. I know well that the wretch will not touch me without God's willing it, but what is he up to? He is beginning to attack me openly **(147)** and with such great fury and hate, but he does not disturb my peace for a moment, and this composure of mine makes him furious.

714 + The Lord said to me today: **Go to the Superior and tell her that I want all the sisters and wards to say the chaplet which I have taught you. They are to say it for nine days in the chapel in order to appease My Father and to entreat God's mercy for Poland.** I answered the Lord that I would tell her, but that I must first speak about this with Father Andrasz, and I resolved that as soon as Father comes I will speak to him at once about this matter. When Father arrived, the circumstances were such that they prevented me from seeing him, but I should not have paid any attention to the circumstances and should have gone and settled the matter. I thought to myself, "Well, I'll do it when he comes again."

715 Oh, how much **(148)** that displeased God! In one moment, the presence of God left me, that great presence of God which is continuously within me in a distinctly felt way. At that moment, however, it completely left me. Darkness dominated my soul to such an extent that I did not know whether I was in the state of grace or not. Therefore, I did not receive Holy Communion for four days, after which I saw Father Andrasz and told him everything. He comforted me, saying, "You have not lost the grace of God, but all the same, be true to Him." The moment I left the confessional, God's presence enveloped me as before. I understood that God's grace must be received just as God sends it, in the way He wants, and one must receive it in that form under which God sends it to us.

716 O my Jesus, I am making at this very moment a firm and eternal resolution by virtue of Your grace and mercy, fidelity to the tiniest grace

of Yours.

717 **(149)** All night long, I was preparing to receive Holy Communion, since I could not sleep because of physical suffering. My soul was flooded with love and repentance.

718 After Holy Communion, I heard these words:— **You see what you are of yourself, but do not be frightened at this. If I were to reveal to you the whole misery that you are, you would die of terror. However, be aware of what you are. Because you are such great misery, I have revealed to you the whole ocean of My mercy. I seek and desire souls like yours, but they are few. Your great trust in Me forces Me to continuously grant you graces. You have great and incomprehensible rights over My Heart, for you are a daughter of complete trust. You would not have been able to bear the magnitude of the love which I have for you if I had revealed it to you fully here on earth. I often give you a glimpse of it, but know that this is only an exceptional grace from Me. My love and mercy knows no bounds.**

719 **(150)** Today, I heard these words: **Know, my child, that for your sake I grant blessings to this whole vicinity. But you ought to thank Me on their behalf, as they do not thank Me for the kindnesses I extend to them. For the sake of your gratitude, I will continue to bless them.**

720 O my Jesus, You know how difficult community life is, how many misunderstandings and misconceptions, despite at times the most sincere good will on both sides. But that is Your mystery, O Lord. We shall know it in eternity; however, our judgments should always be mild.

721 It is a great, an immeasurably great grace of God to have a spiritual director. I feel now that, without him, I would not be able to journey alone in my spiritual life. Great is the power of a priest. I thank God unceasingly for giving me a spiritual director.

722 **(151)** + Today, I heard these words: **You see how weak you are, so when shall I be able to count on you?** I answered, “Jesus, be always with me, for I am Your little child. Jesus, You know what little children do.”

723 + Today, I heard these words: **The graces I grant you are not for you**

alone, but for a great number of other souls as well... And your heart is My constant dwelling place, despite the misery that you are. I unite Myself with you, take away your misery and give you My mercy. I perform works of mercy in every soul. The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy. My mercy is confirmed in every work of My hands. He who trusts in My mercy will not perish, for all his affairs are Mine, and his enemies will be shattered at the base of My footstool.

724 (152) On the eve of the retreat, I started to pray that the Lord Jesus might give me just a little health so that I could take part in the retreat, because I was feeling so ill that I thought perhaps it might be my last. However, as soon as I had started praying I felt a strange dissatisfaction. I interrupted the prayer of supplication and began to thank the Lord for everything He sends me, submitting myself completely to His holy will. Then I felt profound peace of soul.

+ Faithful submission to the will of God, always and everywhere, in all events and circumstances of life, gives great glory to God. Such submission to the will of God carries more weight with Him than long fasts, mortifications and the most severe penances. Oh, how great is the reward for one act of loving submission to the will of God! As I write, my soul is enraptured at the thought of how much God loves it and of the peace that my soul already enjoys, here on earth.

+

(153) J.M.J. Cracow, 1936

O Divine Will, be my love!

725 + Eight-day Retreat, October 20, 1936.

My Jesus, I am going into the wilderness today to speak only with You, my Master and my Lord. Let the earth be silent, and You alone speak to me, Jesus. You know that I understand no other voice but Yours, O Good Shepherd. In the dwelling of my heart is that wilderness to which no creature has access. There, You alone are King.

726 + When I entered the chapel for a five-minute adoration, I asked the Lord Jesus how I should conduct myself during this retreat. Then I heard

this voice in my soul: **I desire that you be entirely transformed into love and that you burn ardently as a pure victim of love...**

727 **(154)** Eternal Truth, give me a ray of Your light that I may come to know You, O Lord, and worthily glorify Your infinite mercy. And at the same time, grant me to know myself, the whole abyss of misery that I am.

728 + I have chosen Saint Claude de la Colombiere and Saint Gertrude as my patron saints for this retreat, that they may intercede for me before the Mother of God and the merciful Savior.

729 During the meditation on creation... at a certain point, my soul became closely united to its Lord and Creator. In this union, I recognized the purpose and destiny of my life. My purpose is to become closely united to God through love, and my destiny is to praise and glorify God's mercy.

The Lord has allowed me to know and experience this in a distinct and even physical way. I become lost in admiration when I recognize and experience this incomprehensible love of God with which God loves me. Who is God — and what am I? **(155)** I cannot meditate on this any further. Only love can understand this meeting of two spirits, namely, God-who-is-Spirit and the soul-who-is-creature. The more I know Him, the more completely, with all the strength of my being, I drown in Him.

730 + **In this retreat, I shall keep you continually close to My Heart, that you may better know My mercy, that mercy which I have for people and especially for poor sinners.**

731 On the initial day of the retreat, I was visited by one of the sisters¹⁴³ who had come to make her perpetual vows. She confided to me that she had no trust in God and became discouraged at every little thing. I answered her, "It is well that you have told me this, Sister; I will pray for you." And I spoke a few words to her about how much distrust hurts the Lord Jesus, especially distrust on the part of a chosen soul. She told me that, beginning with her perpetual vows, she would practice trust. Now I know that even [some] souls that are chosen and welladvanced **(156)** in the religious life or the spiritual life do not have the courage to entrust themselves completely to God. And this is so because few souls know the

unfathomable mercy of God and His great goodness.

732 + The great majesty of God which pervaded me today and still pervades me awoke in me a great fear, but a fear filled with respect, and not the fear of a slave, which is quite different from the fear of respect. This fear animated by respect arose in my heart today because of love and the knowledge of the greatness of God, and that is a great joy to the soul. The soul trembles before the smallest offense against God; but that does not trouble or darken its happiness. There, where love is in charge, all is well.

733 It sometimes happens, while I am listening to the meditation, that one word puts me in very close union with the Lord, and I no longer know what Father¹⁴⁴ is saying. I know that I am close to the most merciful Heart of Jesus; my whole spirit is entirely plunged in Him, and in one moment **(157)** I learn more than during long hours of intellectual inquiry and meditation. These are sudden lights which permit me to know things as God sees them, regarding matters of both the interior and the exterior world.

734 I see that Jesus Himself is acting in my soul during this retreat. And as for me, I try only to be faithful to His grace. I have submitted my soul completely to the influence of God. This Mighty Ruler of Heaven has taken entire possession of my soul. I feel that I am being lifted up above earth and heaven into the inner life of God, where I come to know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but always in the unity of majesty.

735 + I will enclose myself in the chalice of Jesus so that I may comfort Him continually. I will do everything within my power to save souls, and I will do it through prayer and suffering.

(158) + I try always to be a Bethany for Jesus, so that He may rest here after all His labors. In Holy Communion, my union with Jesus is so intimate and incomprehensible that even if I wanted to describe it in writing I could not do so, because I lack the words.

736 This evening, I saw the Lord Jesus just as He was during His Passion. His eyes were raised up to His Father, and He was praying for us.

737 + Although I was ill, I made up my mind to make a Holy Hour today as usual. During that hour, I saw the Lord Jesus being scourged at the pillar.

In the midst of this frightful torture, Jesus was praying. After a while, He said to me, **There are few souls who contemplate My Passion with true feeling; I give great graces to souls who meditate devoutly on My Passion.**

738 + **Without special help from Me, you are not even capable of accepting My graces. You know who you are.**

739 (159) After Holy Communion today, I spoke at length to the Lord Jesus about people who are special to me. Then I heard these words: **My daughter, don't be exerting yourself so much with words. Those whom you love in a special way, I too love in a special way, and for your sake, I shower My graces upon them. I am pleased when you tell Me about them, but don't be doing so with such excessive effort.**

740 + O Savior of the world. I unite myself with Your mercy. My Jesus, I join all my sufferings to Yours and deposit them in the treasury of the Church for the benefit of souls.

741 Today, I was led by an Angel to the chasms of hell. It is a place of great torture; how awesomely large and extensive it is! The kinds of tortures I saw: the first torture that constitutes hell is the loss of God; the second is perpetual remorse of conscience; the third is that one's condition will never change; (160) the fourth is the fire that will penetrate the soul without destroying it — a terrible suffering, since it is a purely spiritual fire, lit by God's anger; the fifth torture is continual darkness and a terrible suffocating smell, and, despite the darkness, the devils and the souls of the damned see each other and all the evil, both of others and their own; the sixth torture is the constant company of Satan; the seventh torture is horrible despair, hatred of God, vile words, curses and blasphemies. These are the tortures suffered by all the damned together, but that is not the end of the sufferings. There are special tortures destined for particular souls. These are the torments of the senses. Each soul undergoes terrible and indescribable sufferings, related to the manner in which it has sinned. There are caverns and pits of torture where one form of agony differs from another. I would have died at the very sight of these tortures if the omnipotence of God had not supported me. Let the sinner know that he will be tortured throughout all eternity, in those senses which he made use of to sin. (161) I am writing this at the

command of God, so that no soul may find an excuse by saying there is no hell, or that nobody has ever been there, and so no one can say what it is like.

I, Sister Faustina, by the order of God, have visited the abysses of hell so that I might tell souls about it and testify to its existence. I cannot speak about it now; but I have received a command from God to leave it in writing. The devils were full of hatred for me, but they had to obey me at the command of God. What I have written is but a pale shadow of the things I saw. But I noticed one thing: that most of the souls there are those who disbelieved that there is a hell. When I came to, I could hardly recover from the fright. How terribly souls suffer there! Consequently, I pray even more fervently for the conversion of sinners. I incessantly plead God's mercy upon them. O my Jesus, I would rather be in agony until the end of the world, amidst the greatest sufferings, than offend You by the least sin.

+

(162) J.M.J.

742 My daughter, if I demand through you that people revere My mercy, you should be the first to distinguish yourself by this confidence in My mercy. I demand from you deeds of mercy, which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it.

I am giving you three ways of exercising mercy toward your neighbor: the first — by deed, the second — by word, the third— by prayer. In these three degrees is contained the fullness of mercy, and it is an unquestionable proof of love for Me. By this means a soul glorifies and pays reverence to My mercy. Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy, but there must also be acts of mercy, and I demand the worship of My mercy through the solemn celebration of the Feast and through the veneration of the image which is painted. By means of this image I shall grant many graces to souls. It is to be a reminder of the demands of My mercy, because even the strongest (163) faith is of no avail without works. O my Jesus, You Yourself must help me in everything, because You see how

very little I am, and so I depend solely on Your goodness, O God.

+ Particular Examen

Union with the merciful Christ. With my heart I encompass the whole world, especially countries which are uncivilized or where there is persecution. I am praying for mercy upon them.

743 Two general resolutions:

First: To strive after inner silence and to observe the rule of silence strictly.

Second: Faithfulness to interior inspirations; to bring them into my life and actions according to the advice of my spiritual director.

In this present illness, I desire to glorify the will of God. I will try, as far as I am able, to take part **(164)** in all the community exercises. I will give the Lord God fervent thanks for every sorrow and suffering.

744 + I often feel that, apart from Jesus, I get no help from anyone, although sometimes I am very much in need of clarifications concerning the demands of the Lord.

This evening, I suddenly received light from God regarding a certain matter. For twelve years, I have been reflecting on a certain matter and could not understand it. Today, Jesus gave me to know how much that had pleased Him.

The Feast of Christ the King. [October 25, 1936]

745 During Holy Mass, I was so enveloped in the great interior fire of God's love and the desire to save souls that I do not know how to express it. I feel I am all aflame. I shall fight all evil with the weapon of mercy. I am being burned up by the desire to save souls. I traverse the world's length and breadth **(165)** and venture as far as its ultimate limits and its wildest lands to save souls. I do this through prayer and sacrifice. I want every soul to glorify the mercy of God, for each one experiences the effects of that mercy on himself. The Saints in heaven worship the mercy of the Lord. I want to worship it even now, here on earth, and to spread devotion to it in the way that God demands of me.

746 I have understood that at certain and most difficult moments I shall be alone, deserted by everyone, and that I must face all the storms and fight with all the strength of my soul, even with those from whom I expected to get help.

But I am not alone, because Jesus is with me, and with Him I fear nothing. I am well aware of everything, and I know what God is demanding of me. Suffering, contempt, ridicule, persecution, and humiliation will be my constant lot. I know no other way. For sincere love — ingratitude; this is my path, marked out by the footprints of Jesus.

(166) My Jesus, my strength and my only hope, in You alone is all my hope. My trust will not be frustrated.

747 The day of renewal of vows [Friday, October 30, 1936]. God's presence pervades my soul, not only in a spiritual way, but I feel it in a physical way also.

748 November 2, [1936]. In the evening after Vespers, I went to the cemetery [in the sisters' park]. I had been praying for a while when I saw one of our sisters, who said to me, "We are in the chapel." I understood that I was to go to the chapel and there pray and gain the indulgences. The next day, during Holy Mass, I saw three white doves soaring from the altar toward heaven. I understood that not only the three souls that I saw had gone to heaven, but also many others who had died beyond the confines of our institute. Oh, how good and merciful is the Lord!

749 **(167)** Conversation with Father Andrasz, at the end of the retreat. I was greatly surprised by one thing that I noticed during each conversation in the course of which I had asked advice and direction of Father Andrasz, and it is this: I noticed that Father Andrasz answered all my questions about things which the Lord has asked of me so clearly and with such assurance that it was as though he were experiencing it all himself. O my Jesus, if only there were more spiritual directors of this kind, souls under such guidance would very quickly reach the summits of sanctity and would not waste such great graces! I give unceasing thanks to God for so great a grace; namely, that in His great goodness He has deigned to place these pillars of light along the path of my spiritual life. They light my way so that I do not go astray or become delayed in my journey toward

close union with the Lord. I have a great love for the Church, which educates souls and leads them to God.

750 **(168)** October 31, 1936. Conversation with Mother General [Michael].

When I was talking to Mother General about the question of my leaving the Order, I received this answer: "If Jesus demands of you that you leave this Congregation, let Him give me some sign that this is His will. Sister, pray for such a sign, because I am worried lest you should fall prey to some illusion. On the other hand, I would not want to hinder or oppose the will of God, for I too want to do the will of God." And so, we agreed that I will still remain just as I am, until such time as the Lord will let Mother General know that He demands that I leave this Congregation. And so the matter was put off for a while.

751 And so You see, Jesus, that everything is now up to You. I am perfectly at peace, despite these great urgings. For my part, I have done everything, and it is now Your turn, my Jesus, and in this way **(169)** Your cause will be made apparent. I am totally in accord with Your will; do with me as You please, O Lord, but only grant me the grace of loving You more and more ardently. This is what is most precious to me. I desire nothing but You, O Love Eternal! It matters not along what paths You will lead me, paths of pain or paths of joy. I want to love You at every moment of my life. If You tell me to leave, O Jesus, in order to carry out Your will, I will leave. If You tell me to stay, I will stay. It matters not what I will suffer, in the one instance or the other. O my Jesus, if I leave, I know what I shall have to suffer and endure. I agreed to this with full awareness, and I have already accepted it by an act of the will. It does not matter what the chalice holds for me. It is enough for me to know that it has been given to me by the loving hand of God. If you tell me to turn back and stay, I will stay in spite of all the interior urgings. If You still keep them **(170)** in my soul and leave me in this inner agony even to the end of my life, I accept this in the full consciousness of my will and in loving submission to You, O my God. If I stay, I shall hide myself in Your mercy, my God, so deeply that no human eye will see me. Throughout my life, I want to be a thurible filled with hidden fire, and may the smoke rising up to You, O Living Host, be pleasing to You. I feel in my own heart that every little sacrifice arouses the fire of my love

for You, but in such a silent and secret way that no one will detect it.

752 When I told Mother General that the Lord wanted the Congregation to say the chaplet in order to propitiate God's anger, Mother told me that at present she could not introduce new prayers that had not yet been approved... "But give me the chaplet, Sister, [she said;] perhaps it can be said during an adoration. We **(171)** shall see. It would be good if Father Sopocko could publish a pamphlet with the chaplet; then it would be better and easier to recite it in the Congregation, for it is a bit difficult to do so now."

753 The mercy of the Lord is praised by the holy souls in heaven who have themselves experienced that infinite mercy. What these souls do in heaven, I already will begin to do here on earth. I will praise God for His infinite goodness, and I will strive to bring other souls to know and glorify the inexpressible and incomprehensible mercy of God.

754 + The Lord's Promise: **The souls that say this chaplet will be embraced by My mercy during their lifetime and especially at the hour of their death.**

755 O my Jesus, teach me to open the bosom of mercy and love to everyone who asks for it. Jesus, my Commander, teach me so that all my prayers and deeds may bear the seal of Your mercy.

756 (172) November 18, 1936. Today, I tried to make all my exercises before Benediction, because I was feeling more ill than usual. So I went to bed directly after Benediction. But when I entered the bedroom, I suddenly knew interiorly that I should go to the cell of S.N.,¹⁴⁵ because she was in need of help. I entered her cell at once, and S.N. said to me, "Oh, how good it is that God has brought you here, Sister!" And her voice was so faint that I could hardly hear her. She said to me, "Sister, please bring me some tea with lemon, because I am terribly thirsty, and I cannot move because I am in such pain." And truly, she was suffering very much and had a high fever. I made her more comfortable, and she was able to quench her thirst with the little bit of tea that I brought her. When I entered my own cell, my soul was engulfed by the great love of God, and I understood that we should take great heed of our interior inspirations and follow them faithfully, and that faithfulness to one grace

draws down others.

757 **(173)** November 19, [1936]. During Mass today, I saw the Lord Jesus, who said to me, **Be at peace, My daughter; I see your efforts, which are very pleasing to Me.** And the Lord disappeared, and it was time for Holy Communion. After I received Holy Communion, I suddenly saw the Cenacle and in it Jesus and the Apostles. I saw the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Jesus allowed me to penetrate His interior, and I came to know the greatness of His majesty and, at the same time, His great humbling of Himself. The extraordinary light that allowed me to see His majesty revealed to me, at the same time, what was in my own soul.

758 Jesus gave me to know the depth of His meekness and humility and to understand that He clearly demanded the same of me. I felt the gaze of God in my soul. This filled me with unspeakable love, but I understood that the Lord was looking with love on my virtues and my heroic efforts, and I knew that this was what was drawing God into my heart. It is from this that I have come to understand that it is not enough for me to strive only for the ordinary virtues, but that I must try to exercise **(174)** the heroic virtues. Although exteriorly a thing may be quite ordinary, it is the different manner [in which it is carried out] that only the eye of God catches. O my Jesus, what I have written is just a pale shadow of what I understand in my soul; these are purely spiritual things, but in order to write something of what the Lord gives me to know, I must use words with which I am totally dissatisfied, because they do not express the reality.

759 When I experienced these sufferings for the first time, it was like this: after the annual vows,^{[146](#)} on a certain day, during prayer, I saw a great brilliance and, issuing from the brilliance, rays which completely enveloped me. Then suddenly, I felt a terrible pain in my hands, my feet and my side and the thorns of the crown of thorns. I experienced these sufferings during Holy Mass on Friday, but this was only for a brief moment. This was repeated for several Fridays, and later on I did not experience any sufferings up to the present time; that is, up to the end of September **(175)** of this year. In the course of the present illness, during Holy Mass one Friday, I felt myself pierced by the same sufferings, and this has been repeated on every Friday and sometimes when I meet a soul

that is not in the state of grace. Although this is infrequent, and the suffering lasts a very short time, still it is terrible, and I would not be able to bear it without a special grace from God. There is no outward indication of these sufferings. What will come later, I do not know. All this, for the sake of souls...

760 November 21, [1936]. Jesus, You see that I am neither gravely ill nor in good health. You fill my soul with enthusiasm for action, and I have no strength. The fire of Your love burns in me, and for what I cannot accomplish by physical strength, love will compensate.

761 Jesus, my spirit yearns for You, and I desire very much to be united with You, but Your works hold me back. The number of souls that I am to bring to You is not yet complete. I desire toil and suffering; let everything You have planned **(176)** before the ages be fulfilled in me, O my Creator and Lord! It is only Your word that I understand; it alone gives me strength. Your Spirit, O Lord, is the Spirit of Peace; and nothing troubles my depths because You dwell there, O Lord.

I know that I am under Your special gaze, O Lord. I do not examine with fear Your plans regarding me; my task is to accept everything from Your hand. I do not fear anything, although the storm is raging, and frightful bolts strike all around me, and I then feel quite alone. Yet, my heart senses You, and my trust grows, and I see all Your omnipotence which upholds me. With You, Jesus, I go through life, amid storms and rainbows, with a cry of joy, singing the song of Your mercy. I will not stop singing my song of love until the choir of Angels picks it up. There is no power that can stop me in my flight toward God. I see that even the superiors do not always understand the road along which God is leading me, and I am not surprised at this.

762 **(177)** Once, I saw Father Sopocko praying as he was reflecting on these matters. Then I saw how a ring of light appeared suddenly above his head. Although distance separates us, I often see him, especially as he works at his desk, despite his fatigue.

763 November 22, [1936]. Today during confession, the Lord Jesus spoke to me through the lips of a certain priest. This priest did not know my soul, and I only accused myself of my sins; yet he spoke these words to me:

“Accomplish faithfully everything that Jesus asks of you, despite the difficulties. Know that, although people may be angry with you, Jesus is not angry and never will be angry with you. Pay no attention to human opinion.” This instruction surprised me at first; but I understood that the Lord was speaking through him without his realizing it. O holy mystery, what great treasures are contained in you! O holy faith, you are my guidepost!

764 (178) November 24. Today, I received a letter from Father Sopocko.¹⁴⁷ I learned from it that God Himself is conducting this whole affair. And as the Lord has begun it, so will He continue to carry it along. And the greater the difficulties which I see, the more am I at peace. Oh, if in this whole matter the glory of God and the profit to souls were not greatly served, Satan would not be opposing it so much. But he senses what he is going to lose because of it. I have now learned that Satan hates mercy more than anything else. It is his greatest torment. Still, the word of God will not pass away; God’s utterance is living; difficulties will not suppress the works of God, but show that they are God’s...

765 On one occasion, I saw the convent of the new congregation.¹⁴⁸ As I walked about, inspecting everything, I suddenly saw a crowd of children who seemed to be no older than five to eleven years of age. When they saw me they surrounded me and began to cry out, “Defend us from evil,” (179) and they led me into the chapel which was in this convent. When I entered the chapel, I saw the distressful Lord Jesus. Jesus looked at me graciously and said that He was gravely offended by children: **You are to defend them from evil.** From that moment, I have been praying for children, but I feel that prayer alone is not enough.

766 O my Jesus, you know what efforts are needed to live sincerely and unaffectedly with those from whom our nature flees, or with those who, deliberately or not, have made us suffer. Humanly speaking, this is impossible. At such times more than at others, I try to discover the Lord Jesus in such a person and for this same Jesus, I do everything for such people. In such acts, love is pure, and such practice of love gives the soul endurance and strength. I do not expect anything from creatures, and therefore I am not disappointed. I know that a creature is poor of itself, (180) so what can one expect from it? God is everything for me; I want to

evaluate everything according to God's ways.

767 + My communion with the Lord is now purely spiritual. My soul is touched by God and wholly absorbs itself in Him, even to the complete forgetfulness of self. Permeated by God to its very depths, it drowns in His beauty; it completely dissolves in Him — I am at a loss to describe this, because in writing I am making use of the senses; but there, in that union, the senses are not active; there is a merging of God and the soul; and the life of God to which the soul is admitted is so great that the human tongue cannot express it.

When the soul returns to its habitual form of life, it then sees that this life is all darkness and mist and dreamlike confusion, an infant's swaddling clothes. In such moments the soul only receives from God, for of itself it does nothing; it does not make even the slightest effort; all in her is wrought by God. But when the soul returns to its ordinary state, it sees that it is not **(181)** within its power to continue in this union.

These moments are short, but their effects are lasting. The soul cannot remain long in this state; or else it would be forcibly freed of the bonds of the body forever. Even as it is, it is sustained by a miracle of God. God allows the soul to know in a clear way how much He loves it, as though it were the only object of His delight. The soul recognizes this clearly and without a veil, so to speak. It reaches out for God with all its might, but it feels like a baby; it knows that this is not within its power. Therefore, God descends to the soul and unites it to Himself in a way that... here, I must be silent, for I cannot describe what the soul experiences.

768 It is a strange thing that although the soul which experiences this union with God cannot find words and expressions to describe it, nevertheless, when it meets a similar soul, the two understand each other extraordinarily well in regard to these matters, even though they speak but little with each other. A soul united with God in this way easily recognizes a similar soul, even if **(182)** the latter has not revealed its interior [life] to it, but merely speaks in an ordinary way. It is a kind of spiritual kinship. Souls united with God in this way are few, fewer than we think.

769 I have noticed that the Lord grants this grace to souls for two purposes.

The first is when the soul is to do some great work which is, humanly speaking, absolutely beyond its power. In the second case, I have noticed that the Lord grants it in order that kindred souls might be guided and set at peace, although the Lord can grant this grace as He pleases and to whomever He pleases. However, I have noticed this grace in three priests, one of whom is a secular priest [probably Father Sopocko] and the other two, religious priests [probably Father Elter and Father Andrasz], and also in two religious sisters [probably Mother Michael and Sister Mary Joseph], but not in the same degree.

770 As for myself, I received this grace for the first time, and that for only a brief moment, in the eighteenth¹⁴⁹ year of my life, within the octave of Corpus Christi [June 18-25, 1925], during Vespers, when I made to the Lord Jesus the vow of perpetual chastity. **(183)** I was still living in the world, but I entered the convent soon afterwards. The grace lasted for a very brief moment, but its power was great. After this grace, there was a long interval. It is true that I received many graces from the Lord during this interval, but they were of a different order. It was a time of trials and purification. The trials were so painful that my soul felt as though it was being totally abandoned by God and it was steeped in profound darkness. I became aware and understood that no one would be able to bring me out of those torments or even understand me.

There were two occasions when my soul was plunged into despair, once for half an hour, and the second time for three quarters of an hour. Just as I cannot describe the greatness of the graces, so too with these ordeals sent by the Lord; whatever words I might use, they are only a pale shadow [of the reality]. However, just as the Lord plunged me into these torments, so too He brought me out of them. Only this lasted for a few years, after which I again received this extraordinary grace of union **(184)** which has continued to this day. Still, during this second period of union, there also have been short interruptions. But for some time now, I have not experienced any interruption at all; on the contrary, I am more and more deeply steeped in God. The great light which illumines the mind gives me a knowledge of the greatness of God; but it is not as if I were getting to know the individual attributes, as before — no, it is different now: in one moment, I come to know the entire essence of God.

771 In that same moment, the soul drowns entirely in Him and experiences a happiness as great as that of the chosen ones in heaven. Although the chosen ones in heaven see God face to face and are completely and absolutely happy, still their knowledge of God is not the same. God has given me to understand this. This deeper knowledge begins here on earth, depending on the grace [given], but to a great extent it also depends on our faithfulness to that grace.

However, the soul receiving this unprecedented grace of union with God cannot say that it sees God face to face, because even here there is a very thin veil of faith, but so very **(185)** thin that the soul can say that it sees God and talks with Him. It is “divinized.” God allows the soul to know how much He loves it, and the soul sees that better and holier souls than itself have not received this grace. Therefore, it is filled with holy amazement, which maintains it in deep humility, and it steeps itself in its own nothingness and holy astonishment; and the more it humbles itself, the more closely God unites Himself with it and descends to it.

The soul, at this moment is, as it were, hidden; its senses are inactive; in one moment, it knows God and drowns in Him. It knows the whole depth of the Unfathomable One, and the deeper this knowledge, the more ardently the soul desires Him.

772 Great is the mutual exchange between the soul and God. When the soul leaves its concealment, the senses get a taste of what the soul has delighted in. Although this also is a great grace from God, it is not a purely spiritual one, for in the first moments the senses do not take part. Every grace gives the soul power and strength to act, and courage to suffer. The soul knows very well what God is asking of it, and it carries out **(186)** His holy will despite adversities.

773 Yet, the soul cannot proceed on its own in these matters. It must follow the advice of an enlightened confessor, for otherwise it could go astray or gain no profit.

774 + O my Jesus, I understand well that, just as illness is measured with a thermometer, and a high fever tells us of the seriousness of the illness, so also, in the spiritual life, suffering is the thermometer which measures the love of God in a soul.

775 + My goal is God... and my happiness is in accomplishing His will, and nothing in the world can disturb this happiness for me: no power, no force of any kind.

776 The Lord visited my cell today and said to me, **My daughter, I will not leave you in this community for much longer. I am telling you this so that you will be more diligent in taking advantage of the graces which I grant you.**

777 **(187)** November 27, [1936]. Today I was in heaven, in spirit, and I saw its inconceivable beauties and the happiness that awaits us after death. I saw how all creatures give ceaseless praise and glory to God. I saw how great is happiness in God, which spreads to all creatures, making them happy; and then all the glory and praise which springs from this happiness returns to its source; and they enter into the depths of God, contemplating the inner life of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, whom they will never comprehend or fathom.

This source of happiness is unchanging in its essence, but it is always new, gushing forth happiness for all creatures. Now I understand Saint Paul, who said, “Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

778 And God has given me to understand that there is but one thing that is of infinite value in His eyes, and that is love of God; love, love and once again, love; and nothing can compare with a single act of pure **(188)** love of God. Oh, with what inconceivable favors God gifts a soul that loves Him sincerely! Oh, how happy is the soul who already here on earth enjoys His special favors! And of such are the little and humble souls.

779 The sight of this great majesty of God, which I came to understand more profoundly and which is worshiped by the heavenly spirits according to their degree of grace and the hierarchies into which they are divided, did not cause my soul to be stricken with terror or fear; no, no, not at all! My soul was filled with peace and love, and the more I come to know the greatness of God, the more joyful I become that He is as He is. And I rejoice immensely in His greatness and am delighted that I am so little because, since I am little, He carries me in His arms and holds me close to His Heart.

780 O my God, how I pity those people who do not believe in eternal life; how I pray for them that a ray of mercy would envelop them too, and that God would clasp them to His fatherly bosom.

781 O Love, O queen! Love knows no **(189)** fear, It passes through all the choirs of angels that stand on guard before His throne. It will fear no one. It reaches God and is immersed in Him as in its sole treasure. The Cherubim who guards paradise with flaming sword, has no power over it. O pure love of God, how great and unequalled you are! Oh, if souls only knew your power!

782 + I am very weak today. I cannot even make my meditation in the chapel, but must lie down. O my Jesus, I love You, and I want to worship You with my very weakness, submitting myself entirely to Your holy will.

783 + I must be on my guard, especially today, because I am becoming over-sensitive to everything. Things I would not pay any attention to when I am healthy bother me today. O my Jesus, my shield and my strength, grant me Your grace that I may emerge victorious from these combats. O my Jesus, transform me into Yourself by the power of Your love, that I may be a worthy tool in proclaiming Your mercy.

784 **(190)** + I thank God for this illness and these physical discomforts, because I have time to converse with the Lord Jesus. It is my delight to spend long hours at the feet of the hidden God, and the hours pass like minutes as I lose track of time. I feel that a fire is burning within me, and I understand no other life but that of sacrifice, which flows from pure love.

785 November 29, [1936]. The Mother of God has taught me how to prepare for the Feast of Christmas. I saw Her today, without the Infant Jesus. She said to me: *My daughter, strive after silence and humility, so that Jesus, who dwells in your heart continuously, may be able to rest. Adore Him in your heart; do not go out from your inmost being. My daughter, I shall obtain for you the grace of an interior life which will be such that, without ever leaving that interior life, you will be able to carry out all your external duties with even greater care. Dwell with Him continuously in your own heart. He will be your strength. Communicate with creatures*

only in so far as is necessary (191) and is required by your duties. You are a dwelling place pleasing to the living God; in you He dwells continuously with love and delight. And the living presence of God, which you experience in a more vivid and distinct way, will confirm you, my daughter, in the things I have told you. Try to act in this way until Christmas Day, and then He Himself will make known to you in what way you will be communing and uniting yourself with Him.

786 November 30, [1936]. During Vespers today, an unusual pain pierced my soul. I see that, in every respect, this work is beyond my strength. I am a little child before the immensity of the task, and it is only at the Lord's clear command that I am setting about to carry it out. On the other hand, even these great graces are a burden for me, and I am barely able to carry them. I see my superiors' disbelief and doubts of all kinds and, for this reason, their apprehensive behavior towards me. My Jesus, I see that even such great graces can be [a source of] suffering. And yet, it is so; **(192)** not only may they be a cause of suffering, but they must be such, as a sign of God's action. I understand well that if God Himself did not strengthen the soul in these various ordeals, the soul would not be able to master the situation. Thus God Himself is its shield.

As I continued Vespers, meditating on this mixture of suffering and grace, I heard the voice of Our Lady: *Know, My daughter, that although I was raised to the dignity of Mother of God, seven swords of pain pierced My heart. Don't do anything to defend yourself; bear everything with humility; God Himself will defend you.*

December 1, [1936]. One-day retreat.

787 Today, during the morning meditation, the Lord gave me to see and understand clearly that His demands are unchangeable. I see clearly that no one can release me from the duty of doing the known will of God. A great lack of health and physical strength is not a sufficient reason and does not release me **(193)** from this work that the Lord Himself is carrying out through me. I am to be just a tool in His hands. And so, O Lord, here I am to carry out Your will. Command me according to Your eternal plans and desires. Only give me the grace that I may always be faithful to You.

788 As I was conversing with the hidden God, He gave me to see and understand that I should not be reflecting so much and building up fear of the difficulties which I might encounter. **Know that I am with you; I bring about the difficulties, and I overcome them; in one instant, I can change a hostile disposition to one which is favorable to this cause.** The Lord explained many things to me in today's dialogue, although I am not putting everything in writing.

789 Always and in all circumstances, yield the first place to others; especially during recreation listen quietly, without interrupting, even if someone tells me the same thing ten times. I will never ask questions about something that interests me very much.

790 **(194)** Resolution: still the same; namely, to unite myself with the Merciful Christ.

General resolution: interior calm, silence.

791 Hide me, Jesus, in the depths of Your mercy, and then let my neighbor judge me as he pleases.

792 I must never speak of my own experiences. In suffering, I must seek relief in prayer. In doubts, even the smallest, I must seek only the advice of my confessor. I must always have a heart which is open to receive the sufferings of others, and drown my own sufferings in the Divine Heart so that they would not be noticed on the outside, in so far as possible.

I must always strive for equanimity, no matter how stormy the circumstances might be. I must not allow anything to disturb my interior calm and silence. Nothing can compare with peace of soul. When I am wrongfully accused of something, I will not explain myself; if the superior wants to know **(195)** the truth, whether I was in the right or not, let her find out from others rather than from me. My concern is to accept everything with a humble inner disposition.

I will spend this Advent in accordance with the directions of the Mother of God: in meekness and humility.

793 I am reliving these moments with Our Lady. With great longing, I am waiting for the Lord's coming. Great are my desires. I desire that all

humankind come to know the Lord. I would like to prepare all nations for the coming of the Word Incarnate. O Jesus, make the fount of Your mercy gush forth more abundantly, for humankind is seriously ill and thus has more need than ever of Your compassion. You are a bottomless sea of mercy for us sinners; and the greater the misery, the more right we have to Your mercy. You are a fount which makes all creatures happy by Your infinite mercy.

794 **(196)** Today [December 9, 1936], I am leaving for Pradnik, just outside Cracow, to undergo treatment. I am to stay there for three months. I am being sent there through the great solicitude of my superiors, especially that of our dear Mother General [Michael], who is so solicitous for the sisters who are ill.

795 I have accepted the favor of this treatment, but I am fully resigned to the will of God. Let God do with me as He pleases. I desire nothing but the fulfillment of His holy will. I am uniting myself with the Mother of God, and I am leaving Nazareth and going to Bethlehem. I will spend Christmas there among strangers, yet with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, because such is the will of God. I am striving to do the will of God in all things. I do not desire a return to health more than death. I entrust myself completely to His infinite mercy and, as a little child, I am living in the greatest peace. I am trying only to make my love for Him deeper and purer, to be a delight to His divine glance...

796 **(197)** The Lord told me to say this chaplet for nine days before the Feast of Mercy. It is to begin on Good Friday. **By this novena, I will grant every possible grace to souls.**

797 When I was somewhat overcome by the fear that I was to be outside the community for so long a time alone, Jesus said to me, **You will not be alone, because I am with you always and everywhere. Near to My Heart, fear nothing. I Myself am the cause of your departure. Know that My eyes follow every move of your heart with great attention. I am bringing you into seclusion so that I Myself may form your heart according to My future plans. What are you afraid of? If you are with Me, who will dare touch you? Nevertheless, I am very pleased that you confide your fears to Me, My daughter. Speak to Me about everything in a completely simple and human way; by this you will**

give Me great joy. I understand you because I am God-Man. (198) This simple language of your heart is more pleasing to Me than the hymns composed in My honor. Know, My daughter, that the simpler your speech is, the more you attract Me to yourself. And now, be at peace close to My Heart. Lay your pen aside and get ready to leave.

798 December 9, 1936. This morning, I left for Pradnik. Sister Chrysostom drove me here. I have a private room to myself; I am very much like a Carmelite. When Sister Chrysostom had left and I was alone, I steeped myself in prayer, entrusting myself to the special protection of the Mother of God. She alone is always with me. She, like a good Mother, watches over all my trials and efforts.

799 Suddenly, I saw the Lord Jesus, who said to me, **Be at peace, My child. See, you are not alone. My Heart watches over you.** Jesus filled me with strength concerning a certain person. I feel strength within my soul.

(199) A moral principle.

800 If one does not know what is better, one must reflect, consider and seek advice, because one must not act with an uncertain conscience. When uncertain, say to yourself: "Whatever I do will be good. I have the intention of doing good." The Lord God accepts what we consider good, and the Lord God also accepts and considers it as good. One should not worry if, after some time, one sees that these things are not good. God looks at the intention with which we begin, and will reward us accordingly. This is a principle which we ought to follow.

801 Today, I still managed to pay a short visit to the Lord [in the Eucharist] before going to bed. My spirit was immersed in Him as in its only treasure. My heart rested a while near the Heart of my Spouse. I received light as to how I should behave toward those around me, and then I returned to my solitude. The doctor is taking good care of me; all those around me are very kind to me.

802 **(200)** December 10, [1936]. I got up earlier today and made my meditation before Holy Mass. Holy Mass is at six o'clock here. After Holy Communion my spirit was drowned in the Lord as in the sole object of its love. I felt absorbed by His omnipotence. When I came back to my

private room, I felt sick and had to lie down at once. The sister¹⁵⁰ brought me some medication, but I felt bad all day. In the evening, I tried to make a Holy Hour, but I could not do so; all I could do was unite myself with the suffering Jesus.

803 My room is next to the men's ward. I didn't know that men were such chatterboxes. From morning till late at night, there is talk about various subjects. The women's ward is much quieter. It is women who are always blamed for this; but I have had occasion to be convinced that the opposite is true. It is very difficult for me to concentrate on my prayer in the midst of these jokes and this laughter. They do not disturb me when the grace of God takes complete possession of me, **(201)** because then I do not know what is going on around me.

804 My Jesus, how little these people talk about You. They talk about everything but You, Jesus. And if they talk so little [about You], it is quite probable that they do not think about You at all. The whole world interests them; but about You, their Creator, there is silence. Jesus, I am sad to see this great indifference and ingratitude of creatures. O my Jesus, I want to love You for them and to make atonement to You, by my love.

Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God.

805 From early morning, I felt the nearness of the Blessed Mother. During Holy Mass, I saw Her, so lovely and so beautiful that I have no words to express even a small part of this beauty. She was all [in] white, with a blue sash around Her waist. Her cloak was also blue, and there was a crown on Her head. Marvelous light streamed forth from Her whole figure. *I am the Queen of heaven and earth, but especially the Mother of your [Congregation]*. She pressed me to Her heart and said, *I feel constant compassion for you*. I felt **(202)** the force of Her Immaculate Heart which was communicated to my soul. Now I understand why I have been preparing for this feast for two months and have been looking forward to it with such yearning. From today onwards, I am going to strive for the greatest purity of soul, that the rays of God's grace may be reflected in all their brilliance. I long to be a crystal in order to find favor in His eyes.

806 + That same day, I saw a certain priest [probably Father Sopocko or

Father Andrasz] who was surrounded by the splendor which flowed from Her; evidently, this soul loves the Immaculate One.

807 An extraordinary yearning fills my soul. I am surprised that it does not separate the soul from the body. I desire God; I want to become immersed in Him. I understand that I am in a terrible exile; my soul aspires for God with all its might. O you inhabitants of my fatherland, be mindful of this exile! When will the veils be lifted for me as well? Although I see **(203)** and feel to a certain extent how very thin is the veil separating me from the Lord, I long to see Him face to face; but let everything be done according to Your will.

808 December 11. I could not assist at the whole Mass today; I assisted at only the most important parts, and after receiving Holy Communion I immediately returned to my solitude. The presence of God suddenly enveloped me, and at the same moment I felt the Passion of the Lord, for a very short while. During that moment, I attained a more profound knowledge of the work of mercy.

809 During the night, I was suddenly awakened and knew that some soul was asking me for prayer, and that it was in much need of prayer. Briefly, but with all my soul, I asked the Lord for grace for her.

810 The following afternoon, when I entered the ward, I saw someone dying, and learned that the agony had started during the night. When I verified it — it had been at the time when **(204)** I had been asked for prayer. And just then, I heard a voice in my soul: **Say the chaplet which I taught you.** I ran to fetch my rosary and knelt down by the dying person and, with all the ardor of my soul, I began to say the chaplet. Suddenly the dying person opened her eyes and looked at me; I had not managed to finish the entire chaplet when she died, with extraordinary peace. I fervently asked the Lord to fulfill the promise He had given me for the recitation of the chaplet. The Lord gave me to know that the soul had been granted the grace He had promised me. That was the first soul to receive the benefit of the Lord's promise. I could feel the power of mercy envelop that soul.

811 When I entered my solitude, I heard these words: **At the hour of their death, I defend as My own glory every soul that will say this chaplet;**

or when others say it for a dying person, the pardon is the same. When (205) this chaplet is said by the bedside of a dying person, God's anger is placated, unfathomable mercy envelops the soul, and the very depths of My tender mercy are moved for the sake of the sorrowful Passion of My Son.

Oh, if only everyone realized how great the Lord's mercy is and how much we all need that mercy, especially at that crucial hour!

812 + Today I have fought a battle with the spirits of darkness over one soul. How terribly Satan hates God's mercy! I see how he opposes this whole work.

813 + O merciful Jesus, stretched on the cross, be mindful of the hour of our death. O most merciful Heart of Jesus, opened with a lance, shelter me at the last moment of my life. O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of unfathomable mercy for me at the hour of my death, O dying Jesus, Hostage of mercy, avert the Divine wrath at the hour of my death.

814 **(206)** + December 12, [1936]. Today, I only received Holy Communion and stayed for a few moments of the Mass. All my strength is in You, O Living Bread. It would be difficult for me to live through the day if I did not receive Holy Communion. It is my shield; without You, Jesus, I know not how to live.

815 Jesus, my Love, today gave me to understand how much He loves me, although there is such an enormous gap between us, the Creator and the creature; and yet, in a way, there is something like equality: love fills up the gap. He Himself descends to me and makes me capable of communing with Him. I immerse myself in Him, losing myself as it were; and yet, under His loving gaze, my soul gains strength and power and an awareness that it loves and is especially loved. It knows that the Mighty One protects it. Such prayer, though short, benefits the soul greatly, and whole hours of ordinary prayer do not give the soul that light which is given by a brief moment of this higher form of prayer.

816 **(207)** + This afternoon, I had my first open-air rest [on the sunny veranda at the sanatorium]. Sister Felicia¹⁵¹ visited me today and brought

a few necessary things and some lovely apples and words of greeting from our beloved Mother Superior and dear sisters.

December 13, [1936]. Confession before Jesus.

817 When I reflected that I had not been to confession for more than three weeks, I wept seeing the sinfulness of my soul and certain difficulties. I had not gone to confession because the circumstances made it impossible. On the day of confessions, I had been confined to bed. The following week, confessions were in the afternoon, and I had left for the hospital that morning. This afternoon, Father Andrasz came into my room and sat down to hear my confession. Beforehand, we did not exchange a single word. I was delighted because I was extremely anxious to go to confession. As usual, I unveiled my whole soul. Father gave a reply to each little detail. I felt unusually happy to be able **(208)** to say everything as I did. For penance, he gave me the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus. When I wanted to tell him of the difficulty I have in saying this litany, he rose and began to give me absolution. Suddenly his figure became diffused with a great light, and I saw that it was not Father A., but Jesus. His garments were bright as snow, and He disappeared immediately. At first, I was a little uneasy, but after a while a kind of peace entered my soul; and I took note of the fact that Jesus heard the confession in the same way that confessors do; and yet something was wondrously transpiring in my heart during this confession; I couldn't at first understand what it signified.

818 December 16, [1936]. I have offered this day for Russia. I have offered all my sufferings and prayers for that poor country. After Holy Communion, Jesus said to me, **I cannot suffer that country any longer. Do not tie my hands, My daughter. (209)** I understood that if it had not been for the prayers of souls that are pleasing to God, that whole nation would have already been reduced to nothingness. Oh, how I suffer for that nation which has banished God from its borders!

819 + O inexhaustible spring of Divine Mercy, pour yourself out upon us! Your goodness knows no limits. Confirm, O Lord, the power of Your mercy over the abyss of my misery, for You have no limit to Your mercies. Wonderful and matchless is Your mercy, astonishing the human and angelic mind.

820 My Guardian Angel told me to pray for a certain soul, and in the morning I learned that it was a man whose agony had begun that very moment. The Lord Jesus makes it known to me in a special way when someone is in need of my prayer. I especially know when my prayer is needed by a dying soul. This happens more often now than it did in the past.

821 **(210)** The Lord Jesus gave me to know how very pleasing to Him is a soul who lives in accordance with the will of God. It thereby gives very great glory to God...

822 I have come to understand today that even if I did not accomplish any of the things the Lord is demanding of me, I know that I shall be rewarded as if I had fulfilled everything, because He sees the intention with which I begin, and even if He called me to Himself today, the work would not suffer at all by that, because He Himself is the Lord of both the work and the worker. My part is to love Him to folly; all works are nothing more than a tiny drop before Him. It is love that has meaning and power and merit. He has opened up great horizons in my soul — love compensates for the chasms.

823 December 17, [1936]. I have offered this day for priests. I have suffered more today than ever before, both interiorly and exteriorly. I did not know it was possible to suffer **(211)** so much in one day. I tried to make a Holy Hour, in the course of which my spirit had a taste of the bitterness of the Garden of Gethsemane. I am fighting alone, supported by His arm, against all the difficulties that face me like unassailable walls. But I trust in the power of His name and I fear nothing.

824 In this seclusion, Jesus Himself is my Master. He Himself educates and instructs me. I feel that I am the object of His special action. For His inscrutable purposes and unfathomable decrees, He unites me to Himself in a special way and allows me to penetrate His incomprehensible mysteries. There is one mystery which unites me with the Lord, of which no one — not even angels — may know. And even if I wanted to tell of it, I would not know how to express it. And yet, I live by it and will live by it for ever. This mystery distinguishes me from every other soul here on earth or in eternity.

825 (212) + O bright and clear day on which all my dreams will be fulfilled; O day so eagerly desired, the last day of my life! I look forward with joy to the last stroke the Divine Artist will trace on my soul, which will give my soul a unique beauty that will distinguish me from the beauty of other souls. O great day, on which divine love will be confirmed in me. On that day, for the first time, I shall sing before heaven and earth the song of the Lord's fathomless mercy. This is my work and the mission which the Lord has destined for me from the beginning of the world. That the song of my soul may be pleasing to the Holy Trinity, do You, O Spirit of God, direct and form my soul Yourself. I arm myself with patience and await Your coming, O merciful God, and as to the terrible pains and fear of death, at this moment more than at any other time, I trust in the abyss of Your (213) mercy and am reminding You, O merciful Jesus, sweet Savior, of all the promises You have made to me.

826 This morning I had an adventure. My watch had stopped, and I did not know when to get up, and I thought of what a misfortune it would be to miss Holy Communion. It was still dark, so I had no way of knowing whether it was time to get up. I dressed, made my meditation and went to the chapel, but everything was still locked, and silence reigned everywhere. I steeped myself in prayer, especially for the sick. I now see how much the sick have need of prayer. Finally, the chapel was opened. I found it difficult to pray because I was already feeling very exhausted, and immediately after Holy Communion I returned to my room. Then I saw the Lord, who said to me, **Know, My daughter, that the ardor of your heart is pleasing to Me. And just as you desire ardently to become united with Me in Holy Communion, so too do I desire to give Myself wholly to you; and as a (214) reward for your zeal, rest on My Heart.** At that moment, my spirit was immersed in His Being, like a drop in a bottomless ocean. I drowned myself in Him as in my sole treasure. Thus I came to recognize that the Lord allows certain difficulties for His greater glory.

827 December 18, [1936]. Today I felt bad that a week had gone by and no one had come to visit me.¹⁵² When I complained to the Lord, He answered, **Isn't it enough for you that I visit you every day?** I apologized to the Lord and the hurt vanished. O God, my strength, You are sufficient for me.

828 This evening, I learned that a certain soul was in need of my prayer. I prayed fervently, but felt that this was still not enough, so I continued to pray for a longer time. On the following day, I learned that the agony of a certain soul had started at just that time and had continued until morning. I recognized what struggles it had gone through. **(215)** In a strange way, the Lord Jesus makes known to me that a dying soul has need of my prayer. I feel vividly and clearly that spirit who is asking me for prayer. I was not aware that souls are so closely united, and often it is my Guardian Angel who tells me.

829 During Holy Mass, the little Infant Jesus brings joy to my soul. Often, distance does not exist — I see a certain priest who brings Him down. I am awaiting Christmas with great yearning; I am living in expectation together with the Most Holy Mother.

830 O Light Eternal who come to this earth, enlighten my mind and strengthen my will that I may not give up in times of great affliction. May Your light dissipate all the shadows of doubt. May Your omnipotence act through me. I trust in You, O uncreated Light! You, O Infant Jesus, are a model for me in accomplishing Your Father's will, You, who said, "Behold, I come to do Your will." Grant that I also **(216)** may do God's will faithfully in all things. O Divine Infant, grant me this grace!

831 O my Jesus, my soul was yearning for the days of trial, but do not leave me alone in the darkness of my soul. Rather, do You hold me firmly, close to Yourself. Set a guard over my lips, so that the fragrance of my sufferings may be known and pleasing to You alone.

832 O merciful Jesus, how longingly You hurried to the Upper Room to consecrate the Host that I am to receive in my life. Jesus, You desired to dwell in my heart. Your living Blood unites with mine. Who can understand this close union? My heart encloses within itself the Almighty, the Infinite One. O Jesus, continue to grant me Your divine life. Let Your pure and noble Blood throb with all its might in my heart. I give You my whole **(217)** being. Transform me into Yourself and make me capable of doing Your holy will in all things and of returning Your love. O my sweet Spouse, You know that my heart knows no one but You. You have opened up in my heart an insatiable depth of love for You. From the very first moment it knew You, my heart has loved You

and has lost itself in You as its one and only object. May Your pure and omnipotent love be the driving force of all my actions. Who will ever conceive and understand the depth of mercy that has gushed forth from Your Heart?

833 I have experienced how much envy there is, even in religious life. I see that there are few truly great souls, ready to trample on everything that is not God. O soul, you will find no beauty outside of God. Oh, how fragile is the foundation of those who elevate themselves at the expense of others! What a loss!

834 **(218)** December 19, [1936]. This evening, I felt in my soul that a certain person had need of my prayer. Immediately, I began to pray. Suddenly, I realize interiorly and am aware of whom the spirit is who is asking this of me; I pray until I feel at peace. There is great help for the dying in this chaplet. I often pray for an intention that I have learned of interiorly. I always pray until I experience in my soul that the prayer has had its effect.

835 Especially now, while I am in this hospital, I experience an inner communion with the dying who ask me for prayer when their agony begins. God has given me a wondrous contact with the dying! Since this has been happening more frequently, I have been able to verify it, even to the exact hour.

Today I was awakened suddenly at eleven o'clock at night and clearly felt the presence near me of some spirit who was asking me for prayer. Some force simply compelled me to pray. My vision is purely spiritual, by means of a sudden light **(219)** that God grants me at that moment. I keep on praying until I feel peace in my soul, and not always for an equally long time; because sometimes it happens that with one "Hail Mary" I am already at peace, and then I say the *De Profundis* and pray no longer. And sometimes it happens that I pray the entire chaplet and only then feel at peace. I have also discovered that if I feel constrained to pray for a longer time; that is to say, I experience interior unrest, the soul is undergoing a greater struggle and is going through a longer final agony.

This is how I have verified the exact time: I have a watch, and I look to see what time it is. On the following day, when they tell me about that

person's death, I ask them about the time, and it exactly corresponds, as does the length of the person's last agony. They say to me, "Such and such a person died today, but she passed away quickly and peacefully." It sometimes happens that the dying person is in the second or third building away, yet for the spirit, space does not **(220)** exist. It sometimes happens that I know about a death occurring several hundred kilometers away. This has happened several times with regard to my family and relatives and also sisters in religion, and even souls whom I have not known during their lifetime.

O God of fathomless mercy, who allow me to give relief and help to the dying by my unworthy prayer, be blessed as many thousand times as there are stars in the sky and drops of water in all the oceans! Let Your mercy resound throughout the orb of the earth, and let it rise to the foot of Your throne, giving praise to the greatest of Your attributes; that is, Your incomprehensible mercy. O God, this unfathomable mercy enralls anew all the holy souls and all the spirits of heaven. These pure spirits are immersed in holy amazement as they glorify this inconceivable mercy of God, which in turn arouses even greater admiration in them, and their praise is carried out in a perfect manner. O eternal God, how ardently I desire to glorify this greatest of Your **(221)** attributes; namely, Your unfathomable mercy. I see all my littleness, and cannot compare myself to the heavenly beings who praise the Lord's mercy with holy admiration. But I, too, have found a way to give perfect glory to the incomprehensible mercy of God.

836 O most sweet Jesus, who have deigned to allow miserable me to gain a knowledge of Your unfathomable mercy; O most sweet Jesus, who have graciously demanded that I tell the whole world of Your incomprehensible mercy, this day I take into my hands the two rays that spring from Your merciful Heart; that is, the Blood and the Water; and I scatter them all over the globe so that each soul may receive Your mercy and, having received it, may glorify it for endless ages. O most sweet Jesus who, in Your incomprehensible kindness, have deigned to unite my wretched heart to Your most merciful Heart, it is with Your own Heart that I glorify God, our Father, as no soul has ever glorified Him before.

837 **(222)** December 21, [1936]. The radio is always playing in the

afternoon, so I feel the loss of silence. All morning long, there is ceaseless talk and noise. My God, I was looking forward to being in silence, happy that I should be talking only with the Lord, and here it is just the opposite. Yet, nothing disturbs me now, neither the talking nor the radio. In a word — nothing. By the grace of God, when I am praying I do not even know where I am; I know only that my soul is united with the Lord. And thus I pass my days in this hospital.

838 + I marvel at how many humiliations and sufferings that priest accepts in this whole matter.¹⁵³ I see this at particular times, and I support him with my unworthy prayers. Only God can give one such courage; otherwise one would give up. But I see with joy that all these adversities contribute to God's greater glory. The Lord has few such souls. O infinite eternity, you will make manifest the efforts of heroic souls, because the earth rewards their efforts with hatred and ingratitude. Such souls do not have friends; they are solitary. **(223)** And in this solitude, they gain strength; they draw their strength from God alone. With humility, but also with courage, they stand firmly in the face of all the storms that beat upon them. Like high-towering oaks, they are unmoved. And in this there is just this one secret: that it's from God that they draw this strength, and everything whatsoever they have need of, they have for themselves and for others. They not only carry their own burden, but also know how to take on, and are capable of taking on, the burdens of others. They are pillars of light along God's ways; they live in light themselves and shed light upon others. They themselves live on the heights, and know how to show the way to lesser ones and help them attain those heights.

839 + My Jesus, You see that I do not know how to write well and, on top of that, I don't even have a good pen. And often it scratches so badly that I must put sentences together, letter by letter. And that is not all. I also have the difficulty of keeping secret from the sisters the things I write down, and so I often have to shut my notebook every few minutes and listen patiently to someone's story, **(224)** and then the time set aside for writing is gone. And when I shut the notebook suddenly, the ink smears. I write with the permission of my superiors and at the command of my confessor. It is a strange thing: sometimes the writing goes quite well, but at other times, I can hardly read it myself.

840 December 23, [1936]. I am spending this time with the Mother of God and preparing myself for the solemn moment of the coming of the Lord Jesus. The Mother of God is instructing me in the interior life of the soul with Jesus, especially in Holy Communion. It is only in eternity that we shall know the great mystery effected in us by Holy Communion. O most precious moments of my life!

841 O my Creator, I long for You! You understand me, O Lord of mine! All that is on earth seems to me like a pale shadow. It is You I long for and desire. Although You do so inconceivably much for me, for You yourself visit me in a special way, yet those visits do not soothe the wound of the heart, but make me long all the more **(225)** for You, O Lord. Oh, take me to Yourself, Lord, if such is Your will! You know that I am dying, and I am dying of longing for You; and yet, I cannot die. Death, where are you? You draw me into the abyss of Your divinity, and You veil yourself with darkness. My whole being is immersed in You, yet I desire to see You face to face. When will this come about for me?

842 Sister Chrysostom¹⁵⁴ came to visit me today. She brought some lemons and apples and a tiny Christmas tree. I was delighted with them. Through Sister Chrysostom, Mother Superior asked the doctor [Adam Silberg] to let me come home for Christmas, and he readily agreed. I was very happy and burst into tears like a little child. Sister Chrysostom was surprised that I looked so bad and had changed so much, and she told me, “You know, Little Faustina, probably you will die. You must be suffering a great deal, Sister.” I answered that I was suffering more that day than on other days, but that it was nothing and that, for the salvation of souls, it was not too much. O merciful Jesus, give me the souls of sinners!

843 **(226)** December 24, [1936]. During Holy Mass today, I was united in a particular way with God and His Immaculate Mother. The humility and love of the Immaculate Virgin penetrated my soul. The more I imitate the Mother of God, the more deeply I get to know God. Oh, what infinite longing envelops my soul! Jesus, how can You still leave me in this exile? I am dying of longing for You. Every touch of my soul by You wounds me immensely. Love and suffering go together; yet I would not exchange this pain caused by You for any treasure, because it is the pain of incomprehensible delights, and these wounds of the soul are inflicted

by a loving hand.

844 Sister C.¹⁵⁵ came in the afternoon and took me home for the holydays. I was happy to be reunited with the community. As we were riding through the city [Cracow], I imagined it was the town of Bethlehem. As I watched all those people hurrying about, I thought: who is meditating today, in recollection and silence, on this inconceivable mystery? O pure Virgin, You are traveling today, and so am I. I feel that **(227)** today's journey has its symbolism. O radiant Virgin, pure as crystal, all immersed in God, I offer You my spiritual life; arrange everything that it may be pleasing to Your Son. O my Mother, how ardently I desire that You give me the Infant Jesus during the Midnight Mass. And I felt such a living presence of God in the depths of my soul, that it was only by sheer will-power that I restrained my joy in order not to show outwardly what was going on in my soul.

845 Before the vigil supper, I entered the chapel for a moment to break the wafer spiritually with those dear to my heart. I presented them all, by name, to Jesus and begged for graces on their behalf. But that wasn't all. I commended to the Lord all those who are being persecuted, those who are suffering, those who do not know His Name, and especially poor sinners. O little Jesus, I fervently ask You, enclose them all in the ocean of Your incomprehensible mercy. O sweet little Jesus, here is my heart; let it be a little cozy dwelling place for Yourself. O Infinite Majesty, with what sweetness You drew close to us. **(228)** Here, there is no dread of the thunderbolts of the great Jehovah; here, there is the sweet little Jesus. Here, no soul is afraid, although Your majesty has not lessened, but only concealed itself. After supper, I felt very tired and was in pain. I had to lie down. But I kept vigil with the Most Holy Mother, awaiting the arrival of the little Child.

846 December 25, [1936]. Midnight Mass. During Mass, God's presence pierced me through and through. A moment before the Elevation I saw the Mother of God and the Infant Jesus and the good Old Man [St. Joseph]. The Most Holy Mother spoke these words to me: *My daughter, Faustina, take this most precious Treasure*, and she gave me the Infant Jesus. When I took Jesus in my arms, my soul felt such unspeakable joy that I am unable to describe it. But, strange thing, after a short while

Jesus became awful, horrible-looking, grown up and suffering; and then the vision vanished, and soon it was time to go to Holy Communion. When I received the Lord Jesus in Holy Communion, my soul trembled under the influence of God's presence. The next day, (229) I saw the Divine Infant for a brief moment during the Elevation.

847 On the second day of the Feast, Father Andrasz came to celebrate Mass for us, and during Mass I again saw the little Jesus. In the afternoon, I went to confession. Father did not give an answer to some of my questions that concerned this work. He said, "When you recover, we shall talk about it in concrete terms; and now, try to recover completely. As for the rest, you know what guidance to follow and what direction to take in these matters." As penance, Father told me to say the chaplet that Jesus had taught me.

848 While I was saying the chaplet, I heard a voice which said, **Oh, what great graces I will grant to souls who say this chaplet; the very depths of My tender mercy are stirred for the sake of those who say the chaplet. Write down these words, My daughter. Speak to the world about My mercy; let all mankind recognize My unfathomable mercy. It is a sign for the end times; after it will come (230) the day of justice. While there is still time, let them have recourse to the fount of My mercy; let them profit from the Blood and Water which gushed forth for them.**

O human souls, where are you going to hide on the day of God's anger: Take refuge now in the fount of God's mercy. O what a great multitude of souls I see! They worshiped the Divine Mercy and will be singing the hymn of praise for all eternity.

849 December 27. Today, I returned to my place of solitude [her private room at the sanatorium]. I had a pleasant trip as I traveled with a certain person¹⁵⁶ who was taking her baby to be baptized. We gave her a lift as far as the Church in Podgorze.¹⁵⁷ In order to get out, she put the baby in my arms. When I took it, I offered it, with an ardent prayer, to God so that some day it might give Him special glory. I felt in my soul that the Lord was looking in a special way on that little soul. When we arrived at Pradnik, Sister N.¹⁵⁸ helped me to carry my bundle. When we entered my room, we saw a beautiful paper angel with the inscription, "Gloria in...."

I think it is from (231) the sick sister to whom I sent the Christmas tree.[159](#)

850 And so, the holydays are over. Nothing can still the yearning of my soul. I long for You, O my Creator and Eternal God! Neither celebrations nor beautiful hymns soothe my soul; rather, they make me yearn all the more. At the very mention of Your Name, my spirit springs toward You, O Lord.

851 December 28, [1936]. Today I have started a novena to The Divine Mercy. That is, I place myself in spirit before the image and recite the chaplet which the Lord has taught me. On the second day of the novena, I saw the image, as it were, come alive, adorned with numberless votive lamps, and I saw great crowds of people coming there, and many of them were filled with happiness. O Jesus, with what great joy did my heart beat! I am making the novena for the intention of two people; namely, the Archbishop [Jalbrzykowski] and Father Sopocko. I am earnestly asking the Lord to inspire the Archbishop to approve the chaplet, which is so pleasing to God, and also the image, and that he may not put off or delay this work....

852 (232) Today the Lord's gaze shot through me suddenly, like lightning. At once, I came to know the tiniest specks in my soul, and knowing the depths of my misery, I fell to my knees and begged the Lord's pardon, and with great trust I immersed myself in His infinite mercy. Such knowledge does not depress me nor keep me away from the Lord, but rather it arouses in my soul greater love and boundless trust. The repentance of my heart is linked to love. These extraordinary flashes from the Lord educate my soul. O sweet rays of God, enlighten me to the most secret depth, for I want to arrive at the greatest possible purity of heart and soul.

853 In the evening, a great longing took possession of my soul. I took the pamphlet with the Image of the Merciful Jesus on it and pressed it to my heart, and the following words burst forth from my soul: "Jesus, Eternal Love, I live for You, I die for You, and I want to become united with You." Suddenly, I saw the Lord in His inexpressible beauty. He looked at me graciously and said, (233) **My daughter, I too came down from heaven out of love for you; I lived for you, I died for you, and I created the heavens for you.** And Jesus pressed me to His Heart and

said to me, **Very soon now; be at peace, My daughter.** When I was alone, my soul was set afire with the desire to suffer until the moment when the Lord would say, “Enough.” And even if I were to live for thousands of years, I see in the light of God that that is but one moment. Souls...[unfinished thought].

854 December 29, [1936]. Today after Holy Communion, I heard a voice in my soul: **My daughter, stand ready, for I will come unexpectedly.** Jesus, You do not want to tell me the hour I am looking forward to with such longing? **My daughter, it is for your own good. You will learn it, but not now; keep watch.** O Jesus, do with me as You please. I know You are the merciful Savior and You will not change towards me at the hour of my death. If at this time, you are showing me so much special love, and are condescending to unite Yourself with me in such an intimate way and with such great kindness, I expect even **(234)** more at the hour of my death. You, my Lord-God, cannot change. You are always the same. Heaven can change, as well as everything that is created; but You, Lord, are ever the same and will endure forever. So come as You like and when You like. Father of infinite mercy, I, Your child, wait longingly for Your coming. O Jesus, You said in the Holy Gospel, “Out of your mouth do I judge you.” Well, Jesus, I am always speaking of Your inconceivable mercy, so I trust that You will judge me according to Your unfathomable mercy.

855 December 30, 1936. The year is coming to an end. I took today as the day of the monthly retreat. My spirit engrossed itself in the benefits that God has lavished on me throughout this whole year. My soul trembled at the sight of this immensity of God’s graces. From my soul there burst forth a hymn of thanksgiving to the Lord. For a whole hour, I remained steeped in adoration and thanksgiving, contemplating, one by one, the benefits I had received from God and also my own minor shortcomings. **(235)** All that this year contained has gone into the abyss of eternity. Nothing is lost. I am glad that nothing gets lost.

December 30, [1936]. One-day retreat.

856 During the morning meditation, I felt an aversion and a repugnance for all created things. Everything pales before my eyes; my spirit is detached from all things. I desire only God Himself, and yet I must live. This is a

martyrdom beyond description. God imparts Himself to the soul in a loving way and draws it into the infinite depths of His divinity, but at the same time He leaves it here on earth for the sole purpose that it might suffer and die of longing for Him. And this strong love is so pure that God Himself finds pleasure in it; and self-love has no access to its deeds, for here everything is totally saturated with bitterness, and thus is totally pure. Life is a continuous dying, painful and terrible, and at the same time it is the depth of true life and of inconceivable happiness and the strength of the soul; and because of this, [the soul] is capable of great deeds for the sake of God.

857 (236) + In the evening, I prayed for a few hours, first for my parents and relatives, for Mother General and for the whole Congregation, for our students, and for three priests [probably Archbishop Jalbrzykowski, Father Sopocko, and Father Andrasz] to whom I owe very much. I ran the length and breadth of the whole world and thanked the unfathomable mercy of God for all the graces granted to people, and I begged pardon for everything by which they have offended Him.

858 During Vespers, I saw the Lord Jesus, who looked sweetly and profoundly into my soul. **My daughter, have patience; it won't be long now.** That profound look and those words filled my soul with strength and power, courage and extraordinary trust that I would carry out everything He was demanding of me, despite such tremendous difficulties, and [filled me with] a special conviction that the Lord is with me and that with Him I can do all things. All the powers on earth and in hell are as nothing to me. Everything must fall before the power of His Name. I entrust everything into Your hands, O my Lord and God. Sole Commander of my soul, direct me according to Your eternal desires.

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859 (237) J.M.J. Cracow, Pradnik, January 1, 1937.

Jesus, I trust in You.

+ Today, at midnight, I bid good-bye to the old year 1936, and welcomed the year 1937. It was with fear and trembling that, in this first hour of the year, I faced this new period of time. Merciful Jesus, with You I go boldly and courageously into conflicts and battles. In Your Name, I will

accomplish everything and overcome everything. My God, Infinite Goodness, I beg of You, let Your infinite mercy accompany me always and in all things.

As I enter this year, fear of life overwhelms me, but Jesus brings me out of this fear and lets me know what great glory this work of mercy will bring Him.

860 There are times in life when the soul finds comfort only in profound prayer. Would that souls knew how to persevere in prayer at such times. This is very important.

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(238) J.M.J. Jesus, I trust in You.

+ Resolutions for the year 1937, day 1, month 1.

861 Particular examen: remains the same; namely, to unite myself with the Merciful Christ (that is; what would Christ do in such and such a case?) and, in spirit, to embrace the whole world, especially Russia and Spain.

General resolutions.

I. Strict observance of silence — interior silence.

II. To see the image of God in every sister; all love of neighbor must flow from this motive.

III. To do the will of God faithfully at every moment of my life and to live by this.

IV. To give a faithful account of everything to the spiritual director and not to undertake anything of importance without a clear understanding with him. I shall try to clearly lay bare to him the most secret depths of my soul, bearing in mind **(239)** that I am dealing with God Himself, and that His representative is just a human being, and so I must pray daily that he be given light.

V. During the evening examination of conscience, I am to ask myself the question: What if He were to call me today?

VI. Not to look for God far away, but within my own being to abide with

Him alone.

VII. In sufferings and torments, to take refuge in the tabernacle and to be silent.

VIII. To join all sufferings, prayers, works and mortifications to the merits of Jesus in order to obtain mercy for the world.

IX. To use free moments, however short, for prayers for the dying.

X. There must not be a day in my life when I do not recommend to the Lord the works of our Congregation. Never have regard for what others think of you [for human respect].

XI. Have no familiar relationships with anyone. Gentle firmness toward the girls, boundless patience; punish them severely but with such punishments as these: prayer and self-sacrifice. The strength that is in the emptying of myself for their sake is for **(240)** them a [source of] constant remorse and the softening of their obdurate hearts.

XII. The presence of God is the basis of all my thoughts, words and deeds.

XIII. To take advantage of all spiritual help. To always put self-love in its proper place; namely, the last. To perform my spiritual exercises as though I were doing them for the last time in my life, and in like manner to carry out all my duties.

862 January 2, [1937]. The Name of Jesus. Oh, how great is Your Name, O Lord! It is the strength of my soul. When my strength fails, and darkness invades my soul, Your Name is the sun whose rays give light and also warmth, and under their influence the soul becomes more beautiful and radiant, taking its splendor from Your Name. When I hear the sweetest name of Jesus, my heartbeat grows stronger, and there are times when, hearing the Name of Jesus, I fall into a swoon. My spirit eagerly strains toward Him. **(241)**

863 This is a particularly important day for me. On this day I made my first visit connected with the painting of the Image.¹⁶⁰ On this day, the Divine Mercy received special external honor for the first time, although it has

been known for a long time, but here it was in the form that the Lord had requested. This day of the sweet Name of Jesus reminds me of many special graces.

864 January 3. The Mother Superior of the Congregation that serves this hospital visited me today, together with one of her sisters.¹⁶¹ For a long while, we talked about spiritual matters. I recognized in her a great ascetic, and so our conversation was pleasing to God.

Today a girl came to see me. I saw that she was suffering, but not so much in body as in soul. I comforted her as much as I could, but my words of consolation were not enough. She was a poor orphan with a soul plunged in bitterness and pain. She opened her soul to me and told me everything. I understood **(242)** that, in this case, simple words of consolation would not be enough. I fervently interceded with the Lord for that soul and offered Him my joy so that He would give it to her and take all feeling of joy away from me. And the Lord heard my prayer: I was left only with the consolation that she had been consoled.

865 Adoration. First Sunday of the month. During adoration, I felt so strongly urged to act that I burst into tears and said to the Lord, “Jesus, do not urge me, but give this inspiration to those who You know are delaying the work.” And I heard these words: **My daughter, be at peace; it will not be long now.**

866 During Vespers, I heard these words: **My daughter, I want to repose in your heart, because many souls have thrown Me out of their hearts today. I have experienced sorrow unto death.** I tried to comfort the Lord, by offering Him my love a thousand times over. I felt, within my soul, a great disgust for sin.

867 **(243)** + My heart is steeped in continual bitterness, because I want to go to You, Lord, into the fullness of life. O Jesus, what a dreadful wilderness this life seems to me! There is on this earth no nourishment for either my heart or my soul. I suffer because of my longing for You, O Lord. You have left me the Sacred Host, O Lord, but it enkindles in my soul an even greater longing for You, O my Creator and Eternal God! Jesus, I yearn to become united with You. Deign to hear the sighs of Your dearly beloved. Oh, how I suffer because I am still unable to be united with You. But let

it be done according to Your wishes.

868 January 5, 1937. This evening, I saw a certain priest [probably Father Sopocko] who was in need of prayer for a certain matter. I prayed fervently because the matter is very close to my heart as well. Thank You, Jesus, for this kindness.

869 O Jesus, have mercy! Embrace the whole world and press me to Your Heart.... O Lord, let my soul repose in the sea of Your unfathomable mercy.

870 **(244)** January 6, 1937. Today during Holy Mass, I was unwittingly absorbed in the infinite majesty of God. The whole immensity of God's love flooded my soul. At that particular moment, I became aware of how much God abases Himself for my sake. He, the Lord of lords—and what am I, miserable being that I am, that You would commune thus with me? The wonder that took hold of me after this special grace continued very vividly throughout the entire day. Taking advantage of the intimacy to which the Lord was admitting me, I interceded before Him for the whole world. At such moments I have the feeling that the whole world is depending on me.

871 + My Master, cause my heart never to expect help from anyone, but I will always strive to bring assistance, consolation and all manner of relief to others. My heart is always open to the sufferings of others; and I will not close my heart to the sufferings of others, even though because of this I have been scornfully nicknamed “dump”; that is, [because] everyone dumps **(245)** his pain into my heart. [To this] I answered that everyone has a place in my heart and I, in return, have a place in the Heart of Jesus. Taunts regarding the law of love will not narrow my heart. My soul is always sensitive on this point, and Jesus alone is the motive for my love of neighbor.

872 January 7. During the Holy Hour, the Lord allowed me to taste His Passion. I shared in the bitterness of the suffering that filled His soul to overflowing. Jesus gave me to understand how a soul should be faithful to prayer despite torments, dryness, and temptations; because oftentimes the realization of God's great plans depends mainly on such prayer. If we do not persevere in such prayer, we frustrate what the Lord wanted to do

through us or within us. Let every soul remember these words: “And being in anguish, He prayed longer.” I always prolong such prayer as much as is in my power and in conformity with my duty.

873 **(246)** January 8. On Friday morning, as I was going to the chapel to attend Holy Mass, I suddenly saw a huge juniper tree on the pavement and in it a horrible cat who, looking angrily at me, blocked my way to the chapel. One whisper of the name of Jesus dissipated all that. I offered the whole day for dying sinners. During Holy Mass, I felt the closeness of the Lord in a special way. After Holy Communion, I turned my gaze with trust toward the Lord and told him, “Jesus, I so much desire to tell You something.” And the Lord looked at me with love and said, **And what is it that you desire to tell Me?**

“Jesus, I beg You, by the inconceivable power of Your mercy, that all the souls who will die today escape the fire of hell, even if they have been the greatest sinners. Today is Friday, the memorial of Your bitter agony on the Cross; because Your mercy is inconceivable, the Angels will not be surprised at this.” Jesus pressed me to His Heart and said, **My beloved (247) daughter, you have come to know well the depths of My mercy. I will do what you ask, but unite yourself continually with My agonizing Heart and make reparation to My justice. Know that you have asked Me for a great thing, but I see that this was dictated by your pure love for Me; that is why I am complying with your requests.**

874 Mary, Immaculate Virgin, take me under Your special protection and guard the purity of my soul, heart and body. You are the model and star of my life.

875 Today, I experienced a great suffering during the visit of our sisters. I learned of something that hurt me terribly, but I controlled myself so that the sisters didn’t notice anything. For some time, the pain was tearing my heart apart, but all that is for the sake of poor sinners.... O Jesus, for poor sinners.... Jesus, my strength, stay close to me, help me....

876 **(248)** January 10, 1937. I asked the Lord today to give me strength in the morning so that I could go to receive Holy Communion. My Master, I ask You with all my thirsting heart to give me, if this is according to

Your holy will, any suffering and weakness that You like — I want to suffer all day and all night — but please, I fervently beg You, strengthen me for the one moment when I am to receive Holy Communion. You see very well, Jesus, that here they do not bring Holy Communion to the sick; so, if You do not strengthen me for that moment so that I can go down to the chapel, how can I receive You in the Mystery of Love? And You know how much my heart longs for You. O my sweet Spouse, what's the good of all these reasonings? You know how ardently I desire You, and if You so choose You can do this for me.

On the following morning, I felt as if I were perfectly well; the faintings and the weaknesses ceased. But as soon as I returned from the chapel, all the sufferings and weaknesses immediately returned, as if they had been waiting for me. But I had no fear of them **(249)** at all, because I had been nourished by the Bread of the Strong. I boldly look at everything; even death itself I look straight in the eye.

877 + O Jesus concealed in the Host, my sweet Master and faithful Friend, how happy my soul is to have such a Friend who always keeps me company. I do not feel lonely even though I am in isolation. Jesus-Host, we know each other — that is enough for me.

878 January 12, 1937. Today, when the doctor [Adam Silberg] making his rounds came to see me, he somehow didn't like the way I looked. Naturally, I was suffering more, and so my temperature had gone up considerably. Consequently, he decided I must not go down for Holy Communion until my temperature dropped to normal. I said, "All right," although pain seized my heart; but I said I would go only if I had no fever. So he agreed to that. When the doctor left, I said to the Lord, "Jesus, now it is up to You whether I shall go or not," and I didn't think about it anymore, although the thought kept coming to my mind: I am not **(250)** to have Jesus — no, that's impossible — and not just once but for several days, until my temperature drops. But in the evening, I said to the Lord, "Jesus, if my Communions are pleasing to You, I beg You humbly, grant that I have not one degree of fever tomorrow morning."

In the morning, as I was taking my temperature, I thought to myself, "If there is even one degree, I will not get up because that would be contrary to obedience." But when I looked at the thermometer, there wasn't even

one degree of fever. I jumped to my feet at once and went to Holy Communion. When the doctor came and I told him that I had had not even one degree of fever, and so had gone to Holy Communion, he was surprised. I begged him not to make it difficult for me to go to Holy Communion, for it would have an adverse effect on the treatment. The doctor answered, "For peace of conscience and at the same time to avoid difficulties for yourself, Sister, let us make the following agreement: when the weather is fine, and it isn't raining, and you feel all right, then, Sister, please go; but you must weigh these matters in your conscience." It made me very happy that the doctor was being so considerate **(251)** for my sake. You see, Jesus, that I have already done whatever was up to me; now I am counting on You and am quite at peace.

879 I saw Father Andrasz as he was saying Holy Mass today. Before the Elevation, I saw the Infant Jesus with His hands spread out, and He was very joyous; then, after a moment, I saw nothing more. I was in my room and I continued making my thanksgiving. But later on, I thought to myself, "Why was the Infant Jesus so merry: After all, He is not always so merry when I see Him." Then I heard these words interiorly: **Because I am very much at home in his heart.** And I was not at all surprised at this, because I know he loves Jesus very much.

880 My union with the dying is still as close as ever. Oh, how incomprehensible is God's mercy that the Lord allows me, by my unworthy prayer, to come to the aid of the dying. I try to be at the side of every dying person whenever I can. Have confidence in God, for He is good and inconceivable. His mercy surpasses our understanding.

881 **(252)** January 14, 1937. Today, Jesus entered my room wearing a bright robe and girded with a golden belt, His whole figure resplendent with great majesty. He said, **My daughter, why are you giving in to thoughts of fear?** I answered, "O Lord, You know why." And He said, **Why?** "This work frightens me. You know that I am incapable of carrying it out." And He said, **Why?** "You see very well that I am not in good health, that I have no education, that I have no money, that I am an abyss of misery, that I fear contacts with people. Jesus, I desire only You. You can release me from this." And the Lord said to me, **My daughter, what you have said is true. You are very miserable, and it pleased Me**

to carry out this work of mercy precisely through you who are nothing but misery itself. Do not fear; I will not leave you alone. Do whatever you can in this matter; I will accomplish everything that is lacking in you. You know what is within your power to do; do that. The Lord looked into the depth of my being with great kindness; I thought I would die for joy under that gaze. The Lord disappeared, and joy, (253) strength and power to act remained in my soul. But I was surprised that the Lord did not want to release me and that He is not changing anything He has once said. And despite all these joys, there is always a shadow of sorrow. I see that love and sorrow go hand in hand.

882 I rarely have such visions. But I more often commune with the Lord in a more profound manner. My senses sleep and, although not in a visible way, all things become more real and clearer to me than if I saw them with my eyes. My intellect learns more in one moment than during long years of thinking and meditation, both as regards the essence of God and as regards revealed truths, and also as regards the knowledge of my own misery.

883 Nothing disturbs my union with the Lord, neither conversation with others nor any duties; even if I am to go about settling very important matters, this does not disturb me. My spirit is with God, and my interior being is filled with God, so I do not look for Him (254) outside myself. He, the Lord, penetrates my soul just as a ray from the sun penetrates clear glass. When I was enclosed in my mother's womb, I was not so closely united with her as I am with my God. There, it was an unawareness; but here, it is the fullness of reality and the consciousness of union. My visions are purely interior, but the more I understand them, the less I am able to express them in words.

884 Oh, how beautiful is the world of the spirit! And so real that, by comparison, the exterior life is just a vain illusion and powerlessness.

885 Jesus, give me the strength and wisdom to get through this terrible wilderness, that my heart may bear patiently this longing for You, O my Lord! I always remain in holy amazement when I sense that You are approaching me, You, the Lord of the awesome throne; that You descend to this miserable exile and visit this poor beggar who has nothing but misery! I do not know how to entertain You, my Royal Prince, but You

know that I love You with every beat of my heart. I see how You lower yourself, but nevertheless Your majesty does not **(255)** diminish in my eyes. I know that You love me with the love of a bridegroom, and that is enough for me. Although we are separated by a great chasm, for You are the Creator and I am Your creature, nevertheless, love alone explains our union. Without it, all is incomprehensible. Only love makes it possible to understand these incomprehensible intimacies with which You visit me. O Jesus, Your greatness terrifies me, and I would be in constant astonishment and fear, if You yourself did not set me at peace. You make me capable of communing with You before each approach.

886 January 15, 1937. Sorrow will not establish itself in a heart which loves the will of God. My heart, longing for God, feels the whole misery of exile. I keep going forward bravely — though my feet become wounded — to my homeland and, on the way, I nourish myself on the will of God. It is my food. Help me, happy inhabitants of the heavenly homeland, so that your sister may not falter on the way. Although the desert is fearful, I walk with lifted head and eyes fixed on the sun; that is to say, on the merciful Heart of Jesus.

887 **(256)** January 19, 1937. My life at present flows on in peaceful awareness of God. My silent soul lives on Him, and this conscious life of God in my soul is for me a source of happiness and strength. I do not look for happiness outside the depths of my soul in which God dwells; of this I am aware. I feel a certain need to share myself with others. I have discovered a fountain of happiness in my soul, and it is God. O my God, I see that everything that surrounds me is filled with God, and most of all my own soul, which is adorned with the grace of God. Already now, I will begin to live on that on which I shall live for all eternity.

888 Silence is so powerful a language that it reaches the throne of the living God. Silence is His language, though secret, yet living and powerful.

889 Jesus, You have given me to know and understand in what a soul's greatness consists: not in great deeds but in great love. Love has its worth, and it confers greatness on all our deeds. Although our actions are small and ordinary in themselves, because of love they become great and powerful before God.

890 **(257)** Love is a mystery that transforms everything it touches into things beautiful and pleasing to God. The love of God makes a soul free. She is like a queen; she knows no slavish compulsion; she sets about everything with great freedom of soul, because the love which dwells in her incites her to action. Everything that surrounds her makes her know that only God Himself is worthy of her love. A soul in love with God and immersed in Him approaches her duties with the same dispositions as she does Holy Communion and carries out the simplest tasks with great care, under the loving gaze of God. She is not troubled if, after some time, something turns out to be less successful. She remains calm, because at the time of the action she had done what was in her power. When it happens that the living presence of God, which she enjoys almost constantly, leaves her, she then tries to continue living in lively faith. Her soul understands that there are periods of rest and periods of battle. Through her will, she is always with God. Her soul, like a knight, is well trained in battle; from afar it sees where the foe is hiding and is ready **(258)** for battle. She knows she is not alone — God is her strength.

891 January 21, [1937]. Since early morning today, I have been wondrously united with the Lord. In the evening, the hospital chaplain visited me. After we had talked for a while, I felt my spirit beginning to immerse itself in God, and I began to lose all sense of what was happening around me. I ardently implored Jesus, “Give me the ability to talk.” And the Lord granted that I could talk freely with him. But there was a moment when I could not understand what the priest was saying. I heard his voice, but it was impossible for me to understand him, and I apologized for not understanding him although I could hear his voice. This is a moment of the grace of union with God, but imperfect, because exteriorly the senses are acting imperfectly too. There is no total immersion in God; that is, suspension of the senses, as often happens when one neither sees nor hears anything exteriorly, the whole soul being freely absorbed in God. When such a grace visits me, I want to be alone, and I ask Jesus to **(259)** protect me from the eyes of creatures. I was really very embarrassed before the priest, but I was reassured, because he got to know a little of my soul in confession.

892 Today the Lord gave me to know, in spirit, about the Convent of Divine Mercy. I saw a great spirit in this convent, but everything was poor and

very scanty. O my Jesus, you are allowing me to live in spirit with these souls, but perhaps I shall never set foot there; but may Your Name be blessed, and whatever You have intended, may it be done.

893 January 22, [1937]. Today is Friday. My soul is in a sea of suffering. Sinners have taken everything away from me. But that is all right; I have given everything away for their sake that they might know that You are good and infinitely merciful. I shall be faithful to You, come rain or shine.

894 Today the doctor decided that I am not to go to Mass, but only to Holy Communion. I wanted very much to assist at Mass, but my confessor,¹⁶² in agreement with the doctor, told me to obey. "It is God's will, Sister, that you should get **(260)** well, and you must not undertake mortifications of any kind. Be obedient, Sister, and God will reward you for it." I felt that the confessor's words were Jesus' words, and although it made me sad to miss Holy Mass, during which God had been granting me the grace of seeing the Infant Jesus; nevertheless, I placed obedience above everything else.

I became absorbed in prayer and said my penance. Then I suddenly saw the Lord, who said to me, **My daughter, know that you give Me greater glory by a single act of obedience than by long prayers and mortifications.** Oh, how good it is to live under obedience, to live conscious of the fact that everything I do is pleasing to God!

895 January 23, [1937]. I did not feel like writing today. Then I heard a voice in my soul: **My daughter, you do not live for yourself but for souls; write for their benefit. You know that My will as to your writing has been (261) confirmed many times by your confessors. You know what is pleasing to Me, and if you have any doubts about what I am saying, you also know whom you are to ask. I grant him light to pronounce judgment on my case. My eye watches over him. My daughter, you are to be like a child towards him, full of simplicity and candor. Put his judgment above all My demands. He will guide you according to My will. If he doesn't allow you to carry out My demands, be at peace; I will not judge you, but the matter will remain between Me and him. You are to be obedient.**

896 January 25, 1937. Today my soul is steeped in bitterness. O Jesus, O my Jesus, today everyone can add to my cup of bitterness. It makes no difference whether they be friend or foe, they can all inflict suffering on me. And You, O Jesus, are bound to give me strength and power in these difficult moments. O Blessed Host, support me and seal my lips against all murmuring and complaint. When I am silent, I know I shall be victorious.

897 **(262)** January 27, 1937. I feel considerable improvement in my health. Jesus is bringing me from the gates of death to life, because there was so little left but for me to die, and lo, the Lord grants me the fullness of life. Although I am still to remain in the sanatorium, I am almost completely well. I see that the will of God has not yet been fulfilled in me, and that is why I must live, for I know that if I fulfill everything the Lord has planned for me in this world, He will not leave me in exile any longer, for heaven is my home. But before we go to our Homeland, we must fulfill the will of God on earth; that is, trials and struggles must run their full course in us.

898 O my Jesus, You are giving me back my health and life; give me also strength for battle, because I am unable to do anything without You. Give me strength, for You can do all things. You see that I am a frail child, and what can I do:

I know the full power of Your mercy, and I trust that You will give me everything Your feeble child needs.

899 **(263)** I have desired death so much! I do not know whether I shall ever again in my life experience such great longing for God. There have been times when I fell into a swoon for Him. Oh, how ugly the earth when one knows heaven! I must do violence to myself in order to live. O will of God, you are my nourishment.

900 Oh, how drab and full of misunderstandings is this life! My patience is exercised, and after it comes experience. I understand and learn many things each day and see that I know very little, and I am constantly discovering faults in my conduct. Still, I am not discouraged by this, but thank God that He deigns to grant me His light that I may know myself.

901 + There is a certain person [Stanislava Kwietniewska¹⁶³] who tests my patience. I must devote much time to her. When I talk with her, I feel that she is lying, and this, continually. And because she tells me about things far away which I cannot verify, she is able to get away with the lie. But I am inwardly convinced that there is no **(264)** truth in what she says. When it occurred to me once that I might be mistaken and that she might be telling the truth, I asked the Lord Jesus to give me the following sign: if she is really lying, let her admit to me herself that she has lied about any one of the things concerning which I am inwardly convinced that she is lying. And if she is telling the truth, let the Lord Jesus take this conviction away from me. A little later, she came to me again and said, “Sister, I beg your forgiveness, but I have lied about such and such a thing,” and I understood that the inner light concerning that person had not misled me.

902 January 29, 1937. I overslept today. A little longer, and I would have been too late for Holy Communion because the chapel is a good distance from our section.¹⁶⁴ When I went outdoors, the snow was knee-deep. But before it occurred to me that the doctor would not have allowed me to go out in such snow, I had already come **(265)** to the Lord in the chapel. I received Holy Communion and was back in no time. I heard these words in my soul: **My daughter, rest close to My Heart. Known to Me are your efforts.** My soul is more joyful when I am close to the Heart of my God.

January 30, 1937. One-day retreat.

903 I am coming to know God’s greatness more and more and to rejoice in Him. I remain unceasingly with Him in the depths of my heart. It is in my own soul that I most easily find God.

904 During my meditation, I heard these words: **My daughter, you give Me most glory by patiently submitting to My will, and you win for yourself greater merit than that which any fast or mortification could ever gain for you. Know, My daughter, that if you submit your will to Mine, you draw upon yourself My special delight. This sacrifice is pleasing to Me and full of sweetness. I take great pleasure in it; there is power in it.**

905 **(266)** + Examination of conscience: continuation of the same, to unite myself to the Merciful Christ. Practice: interior silence; that is, strict observance of silence.

906 + In difficult moments, I will fix my gaze upon the silent Heart of Jesus, stretched upon the Cross, and from the exploding flames of His merciful Heart, will flow down upon me power and strength to keep fighting.

907 An extraordinary thing, [that] in winter a canary comes to my window and sings beautifully for a while. I have tried to check whether there is a canary in a cage somewhere around, but there is none anywhere, not even in the neighboring ward. One of the other patients also heard it, but only once, and wondered how a canary could be singing in this freezing season of the year.

908 + O Jesus, how sorry I feel for poor sinners. Jesus, grant them contrition and repentance. Remember Your own sorrowful Passion. I know Your infinite mercy and cannot bear it that a soul that has cost You so much should perish. Jesus, give me the souls **(267)** of sinners; let Your mercy rest upon them. Take everything away from me, but give me souls. I want to become a sacrificial host for sinners. Let the shell of my body conceal my offering, for Your Most Sacred Heart is also hidden in a Host, and certainly You are a living sacrifice.

Transform me into Yourself, O Jesus, that I may be a living sacrifice and pleasing to You. I desire to atone at each moment for poor sinners. The sacrifice of my spirit is hidden under the veil of the body; the human eye does not perceive it, and for that reason it is pure and pleasing to You. O my Creator and Father of great mercy, I trust in You, for You are Goodness Itself. Souls, do not be afraid of God, but trust in Him, for He is good, and His mercy is everlasting.

909 + We know each other mutually, O Lord, in the dwelling of my heart. Yes, now it is I who am receiving You as a Guest in the little home of my heart, but the time is coming when You will call me to Your dwelling place, which You have prepared for me from the beginning of the world. Oh, what am I compared to You, O Lord?

910 **(268)** The Lord is leading me into a world unknown to me. He makes

known to me His great grace, but I am afraid of it and will not submit to its influence in so far as it may be in my power, until I am assured by my spiritual director as to what this grace is.

911 On one occasion, God's presence pervaded my whole being, and my mind was mysteriously enlightened in respect to His Essence. He allowed me to understand His interior life. In spirit, I saw the Three Divine Persons, but Their Essence was One. He is One, and One only, but in Three Persons; none of Them is either greater or smaller; there is no difference in either beauty or sanctity, for They are One. They are absolutely One. His Love transported me into this knowledge and united me with Himself. When I was united to One, I was equally united to the Second and to the Third in such a way that when we are united with One, by that very fact, we are equally united to the two Persons in the same way as with the One. Their will is One, one God, though in Three Persons. When One of the Three Persons communicates with a soul, (269) by the power of that one will, it finds itself united with the Three Persons and is inundated in the happiness flowing from the Most Holy Trinity, the same happiness that nourishes the saints. This same happiness that streams from the Most Holy Trinity makes all creation happy; from it springs that life which vivifies and bestows all life which takes its beginning from Him. In these moments, my soul experienced such great divine delights that I find this difficult to express.

912 Then I heard the following words spoken thus: **I want you to be My spouse.** Fear pierced my soul, but I calmly continued to reflect on what sort of an espousal this could be. However, each time fear would invade my soul, a power from on high would give it peace.

After all, I have taken perpetual vows, and I have taken them of my own completely free will. And so I continued to reflect on what this could mean. I sensed, and came to realize, that this was some special kind of grace. Whenever I think about it, I feel faint for God, but in this swooning, my mind is clear and penetrated with light. When I am united (270) to Him, I faint from an abundance of happiness, but my mind is bright and clear and free from all shadows. You abase Your majesty to dwell with a poor creature. Thank you, O Lord, for this great grace that makes it possible for me to commune with You. Jesus, Your Name is my

delight, I have a presentiment of my Beloved from afar, and my languishing soul rests in His embrace; I don't know how to live without Him. I would rather be with Him in afflictions and suffering than without Him in the greatest heavenly delights.

913 February 2, 1937. Today, from early morning, divine absorption penetrates my soul. During Mass, I thought I would see the little Jesus, as I often do; however, today during Holy Mass I saw the Crucified Jesus. Jesus was nailed to the cross and was in great agony. His suffering pierced me, soul and body, in a manner which was invisible, but nevertheless most painful.

914 Oh, what awesome mysteries take place during Mass! A great mystery is accomplished in the Holy Mass. **(271)** With what great devotion should we listen to and take part in this death of Jesus. One day we will know what God is doing for us in each Mass, and what sort of gift He is preparing in it for us. Only His divine love could permit that such a gift be provided for us. O Jesus, my Jesus, with what great pain is my soul pierced when I see this fountain of life gushing forth with such sweetness and power for each soul, while at the same time I see souls withering away and drying up through their own fault. O Jesus, grant that the power of mercy embrace these souls.

915 + O Mary, today a terrible sword has pierced Your holy soul. Except for God, no one knows of Your suffering. Your soul does not break; it is brave, because it is with Jesus. Sweet Mother, unite my soul to Jesus, because it is only then that I will be able to endure all trials and tribulations, and only in union with Jesus will my little sacrifices be pleasing to God. Sweetest Mother, continue to teach me about the interior life. May the sword of suffering never break me. O pure Virgin, pour courage into my heart and guard it.

916 **(272)** This day is so special for me; even though I encountered so many sufferings, my soul is overflowing with great joy. In a private room next to mine, there was a Jewish woman who was seriously ill. I went to see her three days ago and was deeply pained at the thought that she would soon die without having her soul cleansed by the grace of Baptism. I had an understanding with her nurse, a [religious] Sister, that when her last moment would be approaching, she would baptize her. There was this

difficulty however, that there were always some Jewish people with her. However, I felt inspired to pray before the image which Jesus had instructed me to have painted. I have a leaflet with the Image of the Divine Mercy on the cover. And I said to the Lord, “Jesus, You Yourself told me that You would grant many graces through this image. I ask You, then, for the grace of Holy Baptism for this Jewish lady. It makes no difference who will baptize her, as long as she is baptized.”

After these words, I felt strangely at peace, and I was quite sure that, despite the difficulties, the waters of Holy Baptism would be poured upon her soul. That night, (273) when she was very low, I got out of bed three times to see her, watching for the right moment to give her this grace. The next morning, she seemed to feel a little better. In the afternoon her last moment began to approach. The Sister who was her nurse said that Baptism would be difficult because they were with her. The moment came when the sick woman began to lose consciousness, and as a result, in order to save her, they began to run about; some [went] to fetch the doctor, while others went off in other directions to find help.

And so the patient was left alone, and Sister baptized her, and before they had all rushed back, her soul was beautiful, adorned with God’s grace. Her final agony began immediately, but it did not last long. It was as if she fell asleep. All of a sudden, I saw her soul ascending to heaven in wondrous beauty. Oh, how beautiful is a soul with sanctifying grace! Joy flooded my heart that before this image I had received so great a grace for this soul.

917 Oh, how great is God’s mercy; let every soul praise it. O my Jesus, that soul for all eternity will be singing You a hymn of mercy. **(274)** I shall not forget the impression this day has made on my soul. This is the second great grace which I have received here for souls before this image.

Oh, how good the Lord is, and how full of compassion; Jesus, how heartily I thank You for these graces.

918 February 5, 1937. My Jesus, in spite of everything, I desire very much to unite myself to You. Jesus, if this be possible, take me to Yourself, for it seems to me that my heart will burst of longing for You!

Oh, how very much I feel that I am in exile! When will I find myself in the house of our Father, delighting in the happiness that streams from the Most Holy Trinity? But, if it is Your will that I still go on living and suffering, then I desire what You have destined for me. Keep me here on earth for as long as You wish, even though this be until the end of the world. O will of my Lord, be my delight and the rapture of my soul. Although the earth is so filled with people, I feel all alone, and the earth is a terrible desert to me. O Jesus, Jesus, You know and understand the fervors of my heart; You, O Lord, alone can fill me.

919 (275) + Today, when I warned a certain young lady that she should not be standing for hours in the corridor with the men, because it was unbecoming for a well-bred young lady to do so, she apologized and promised to correct herself. She began to cry when she became aware of her thoughtlessness. As I was saying these few things to her concerning moral behavior, all the men from the ward came over and listened to my words of advice. The Jewish people even heard a few things about themselves. A certain person told me afterwards that they put their ears against the wall and listened attentively. I somehow felt they were listening, but I said what I had to say. The walls are so thin here that one can be heard, even when speaking in a low voice.

920 +There is a woman here¹⁶⁵ who was once one of our students. Naturally, she puts my patience to the test. She comes to see me several times a day. After each of these visits I am tired out, but I see that the Lord Jesus has sent that soul to me. Let everything glorify You, O Lord. Patience gives glory to God. O how poor the souls are!

921 (276) February 6, [1937]. Today, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, I am told that there is much simplicity in you, so why do you not tell Me about everything that concerns you, even the smallest details? Tell Me about everything, and know that this will give Me great joy.** I answered, “But You know about everything, Lord.” And Jesus replied to me, **Yes, I do know; but you should not excuse yourself with the fact that I know, but with childlike simplicity talk to Me about everything, for My ears and heart are inclined towards you, and your words are dear to Me.**

922 + When I began this big novena for three intentions, I saw a tiny insect

on the ground and thought: how did it get here in the middle of winter: Then I heard the following words in my soul: **You see, I am thinking of it and sustaining it, and what is it compared to you? Why was your soul fearful for a moment?** I apologized to the Lord for that moment. Jesus wants me to always be a child and to leave all care to Him, and to submit blindly to His holy will. He took everything upon Himself.

923 (277) February 7, [1937]. Today, the Lord said to me, **I demand of you a perfect and whole-burnt offering; an offering of the will. No other sacrifice can compare with this one. I Myself am directing your life and arranging things in such a way that you will be for Me a continual sacrifice and will always do My will. And for the accomplishment of this offering, you will unite yourself with Me on the Cross. I know what you can do. I Myself will give you many orders directly, but I will delay the possibility of their being carried out and make it depend on others. But what the superiors will not manage to do, I Myself will accomplish directly in your soul. And in the most hidden depths of your soul, a perfect holocaust will be carried out, not just for a while, but know, My daughter, that this offering will last until your death. But there is time, so that I the Lord will fulfill all your wishes. I delight in you as in a living host; let nothing terrify you; I am with you.**

924 Today, I received a note from Mother Superior forbidding me to go to the bedside of the dying. And so, I will send to the dying obedience in place of self, and it will support the souls (278) who are dying. Such is God's will, and that is enough for me. That which I cannot understand now I will learn later.

925 February 7, 1937. Today, I prayed more fervently than ever for the Holy Father [Pius XI] and three priests¹⁶⁶ that God would inspire them as to what He is asking of me, for the realization of this depends on them. Oh, how happy I am that the Holy Father's health is improving. Today I heard him addressing the Eucharistic Congress,¹⁶⁷ and I went there in spirit to receive the Apostolic Blessing.

926 February 9, [1937]. Shrove Tuesday. During the last two days of the carnival, I experienced the overwhelming flood of chastisements and sins. In one instant the Lord gave me a knowledge of the sins committed

throughout the whole world during these days. I fainted from fright, and even though I know the depth of God's mercy, I was surprised that God allows humanity to exist. And the Lord gave me to know who it is that upholds the existence of mankind: it is the chosen souls. When the number of the chosen ones is complete, the world will cease to exist.

927 On these two days, I received Holy Communion **(279)** as an act of reparation, and I said to the Lord, "Jesus, I offer everything today for sinners. Let the blows of Your justice fall on me, and the sea of Your mercy engulf the poor sinners." And the Lord heard my prayer: many souls returned to the Lord, but I was in agony under the yoke of God's justice. I felt I was the object of the anger of the Most High God. By evening my sufferings had reached such a stage of interior desolation that moans welled up involuntarily from my breast. I locked the door of my room and began an adoration; that is to say, a Holy Hour. Interior desolation and an experience of God's justice — that was my prayer; and the moans and pain that welled up from my soul took the place of a sweet conversation with the Lord.

928 Then suddenly I saw the Lord, who clasped me to His Heart and said to me, **My daughter, do not weep, for I cannot bear your tears. I will grant you everything you ask for, but stop crying.** And I was filled with great **(280)** joy, and my spirit, as usual, was drowned in Him as in its only treasure. Today, encouraged by His kindness, I conversed with Jesus at greater length.

929 When I had rested near His sweetest Heart, I told Him, "Jesus, I have so much to tell You." And the Lord said to me with great love, **Speak, My daughter.** And I started to enumerate the pains of my heart; that is, how greatly concerned I am for all mankind, that "they all do not know You, and those who do know You do not love You as You deserve to be loved. I also see how terribly sinners offend You; and then again, I see how severely the faithful, especially Your servants, are oppressed and persecuted. And then, too, I see many souls rushing headlong into the terrible abyss of hell. You see, Jesus, this is the pain that gnaws at my heart and bones. And, although You show me special love and inundate my heart with streams of Your joys, nevertheless, this does not appease the sufferings I have just mentioned, but rather they penetrate my poor

heart (281) all the more acutely. Oh, how ardently I desire that all mankind turn with trust to Your mercy. Then, seeing the glory of Your name, my heart will be comforted.”

Jesus listened to these outpourings of my heart with gravity and interest, as if He had known nothing about them, and this seemed to make it easier for me to talk. And the Lord said to me, **My daughter, those words of your heart are pleasing to Me, and by saying the chaplet you are bringing humankind closer to Me.** After these words, I found myself alone, but the presence of God is always in my soul.

930 + O my Jesus, although I will go to You, and You will fill me with Yourself, and that will make my happiness complete, I will nevertheless not forget about humanity. I desire to draw aside the veils of heaven, so that the earth would have no doubts about The Divine Mercy. My repose is in proclaiming Your mercy. The soul gives the greatest glory to its Creator when it turns with trust to The Divine Mercy.

931 (282) February 10, [1937]. Today is Ash Wednesday.

During Holy Mass, I felt for a short time the Passion of Jesus in my members. Lent is a very special time for the work of priests. We should assist them in rescuing souls.

932 A few days ago, I wrote to my director [probably Father Andrasz¹⁶⁸], asking permission for some little mortifications during Lent. As I did not have the doctor’s permission to go to town, I had to do this by letter. But Ash Wednesday is already here, and I still have no answer. This morning after Holy Communion, I asked Jesus to inspire my director with His light so that he would answer me, and I knew in my soul that Father was not against my practicing these mortifications for which I had asked permission, and that he would give his permission. So, in peace, I began to undertake these practices. That same afternoon I received a letter from Father, saying that he readily gives me permission to undertake those practices for which I had asked (283) permission. I was very pleased that my interior knowledge was in agreement with my spiritual Father’s opinion.

933 Then I heard the following words in my soul: **You will receive a**

greater reward for your obedience and subjection to your confessor than you will for the practices which you will be carrying out. Know this, My daughter, and act accordingly: anything, no matter how small it be, that has the seal of obedience to My representative is pleasing to Me and great in My eyes.

934 Small practices for Lent. Although I wish and desire to do so, I cannot practice big mortifications as before, because I am under the strict surveillance of the doctor. But I can practice little things: first — sleep without a pillow; keep myself a little hungry; every day, with my arms outstretched, say the chaplet which the Lord taught me; occasionally, with arms outstretched, for an indefinite period of time **(284)** pray informally. Intention: to beg divine mercy for poor sinners, and for priests, the power to bring sinful hearts to repentance.

935 My contact with the dying is, just as it has been in the past, very close. I often accompany a person who is dying far away, but my greatest joy is when I see the promise of mercy fulfilled in these souls. The Lord is faithful; what He once ordains — He fulfills.

936 + A certain person in our ward was beginning to die. Amidst terrible tortures, she was dying for three days, sometimes regaining consciousness. Everyone in the ward was praying for her. I longed to go to her, but Mother Superior had forbidden me to go to visit the dying, so I prayed for that poor soul in my room. But when I heard that she was still in agony, and there was no saying how long it was going to take, I suddenly felt inspired in my soul and said to the Lord, “Jesus, if all I do is pleasing to You, **(285)** I ask You, as evidence, to let that soul stop suffering and pass on immediately to her happy eternity.” A few minutes later I learned that the person had passed away so peacefully and quickly that they did not even have time to light the candle.

937 + I will say a word more about my spiritual director [Father Andrasz or Father Sopocko¹⁶⁹]. It is strange that there are so few priests who know how to pour power, strength and courage into a soul so that it can make constant progress without getting tired. Under such direction a soul, even of lesser strength, can do much for the glory of God. And here I discovered a secret; namely, that the confessor, or rather the spiritual director, does not make light of the trifles that the soul brings to him. And

when the soul notices that it is being controlled in this, it begins to exert itself and does not omit the slightest opportunity to practice virtue and also avoids the smallest faults. And from these efforts, as with little stones, there rises within the soul a most beautiful temple. **(286)** On the contrary, if the soul notices that the confessor neglects these little things, it likewise neglects them and ceases to give an account of them to the confessor and, worse still, will begin to grow negligent in little things. Thus, instead of going forward, it gradually retreats backward and becomes aware of the situation only when it has already fallen into some serious trouble. Here, a serious question poses itself: who is at fault, the soul in question or the confessor; that is to say, the director? It seems to me that all the blame should be put on the imprudent director; the soul's only fault is to have taken upon itself the choice of a director. The director could well have led the soul along the road of God's will to sanctity.

938 The soul should have prayed ardently and at greater length for a director and should have asked the Lord himself to choose a spiritual director for it. What begins in God will be godly, and what begins in a purely human manner will remain human. God is so merciful that, in order to **(287)** help a soul He Himself chooses the spiritual guide and will enlighten the soul concerning the one before whom it should uncover the most hidden depths of its soul just as it sees itself before the Lord Jesus Himself. And when the soul considers and recognizes that God has been arranging all this, it should pray fervently for the confessor that he might have the divine light to know it well. And let it not change such a director except for a serious reason. Just as it had prayed fervently and at great length in order to learn God's will before choosing a director, so too should it pray fervently and at great length to discern whether it is truly God's will that he leave this director and choose another. If God's will is not absolutely clear, he should not make this change, for a person will not go far by himself, and Satan wants just this: to have the person who is aspiring for sanctity direct himself because then, without doubt, he will never attain it.

939 There is an exception [to this], and that is when God Himself directs the person, but the director **(288)** will immediately recognize that the person in question is being guided by God Himself. God will allow him to know this clearly and distinctly, and such a person should be even more under

the director's control than anyone else. In this case, the director does not so much guide and point out the road along which the soul is to journey; but rather, he judges and confirms that the soul is following the right path and is being led by a good spirit.

In this situation, the director should be not only holy, but also experienced and prudent, and the soul should give priority to his opinion over that of God Himself, for then the soul will be safe from illusions and deviations. A soul that will not fully submit its inspirations to the strict control of the Church; that is, to the director, clearly shows by this that a bad spirit is guiding it. The director should be extremely prudent in such cases and test the soul's obedience. Satan can even clothe himself in a cloak of humility, but he does not know how to wear the cloak of obedience **(289)** and thus his evil designs will be disclosed. But the director should not be overly afraid of such a soul, because if God puts that special soul in his care, He will also give him great divine light regarding it, for otherwise how could he deal wisely with the great mysteries which take place between the soul and God.

940 I myself suffered a great deal and was much tried in this respect. Therefore, I am writing only about what I myself have experienced. It was only after many novenas, prayers and penances that God sent me a priest who understood my soul. Oh, there would be many more saintly souls if there were more experienced and saintly confessors. Many a soul, earnestly striving for sanctity, cannot manage by itself during times of trial and abandons the road to perfection.

941 O Jesus, give us fervent and holy priests! Oh, how great is the dignity of the priest, but at the same time, how great is his responsibility! Much has been given you, O priest, but much will also be demanded of you....

942 **(290)** February 11, [1937]. Today is Friday. During Mass, I suffered pain in my body: in my hands, my feet and my side. Jesus is sending me this kind of suffering that I may make reparation for sinners. The pain is brief, but very severe. I do not suffer for more than a couple of minutes, but the impression remains for a long time and is very vivid.

943 + Today, I feel such desolation in my soul that I do not know how to explain it even to myself. I would like to hide from people and cry

endlessly. No one understands a heart wounded by love, and when such a heart feels itself abandoned interiorly, no one can comfort it. O souls of sinners, you have taken the Lord away from me, but all right, all right; you get to know how sweet the Lord is, and let the whole sea of bitterness flood my heart. I have given all my divine comforts to you.

944 + There are moments when I mistrust myself, when I feel my own weakness and wretchedness in the most profound depths of my own being, and I have noticed that I can endure such moments only by trusting in the infinite mercy **(291)** of God. Patience, prayer and silence — these are what give strength to the soul. There are moments when one should be silent, and when it would be inappropriate to talk with creatures; these are the moments when one is dissatisfied with oneself, and when the soul feels as weak as a little child. Then the soul clings to God with all its might. At such times, I live solely by faith, and when I feel strengthened by God's grace, then I am more courageous in speaking and communicating with my neighbors.

945 In the evening, the Lord said to me, **My child, rest on My Heart; I see that you have worked hard in My vineyard.** And my soul was flooded with divine joy.

946 February 12, [1937]. Today, the presence of God is piercing me through and through, like a ray from the sun. My soul is longing for God so intensely that I fall into a swoon every now and then. I feel Eternal Love touching my heart, and my littleness cannot bear it, **(292)** and this causes me to swoon. Still, my interior strength is great, and my soul wants to match the Love with which it is loved. The soul at such moments has a very deep knowledge of God, and the more it comes to know Him, the purer and more fervent does its love for Him become. How unfathomable are the mysteries of the soul and God!

947 Sometimes there are whole hours when my soul is lost in wonder at seeing the infinite majesty of God abasing Himself to the level of my soul. Unending is my interior astonishment that the Most High Lord is pleased in me and tells me so Himself. And I immerse myself even deeper in my nothingness, because I know what I am of myself. Still I must say that I, in return, love my Creator to folly with every beat of my heart and with every nerve; my soul unconsciously drowns, drowns... in Him. I feel that

nothing will separate me from the Lord, neither heaven nor earth, neither the present nor the future. Everything may change, but love never, never; it is always the same. **(293)** He, the Immortal Mighty One, makes His will known to me that I may love Him very specially, and He Himself makes my soul capable of the kind of love with which He wants me to love Him. I bury myself more and more in Him, and I fear nothing.

Love has overtaken my whole heart, and even if I were to be told of God's justice and of how even the pure spirits tremble and cover their faces before Him, saying endlessly, "Holy," which would seem to suggest that my familiarity with God would be to the detriment of His honor and majesty, [I would reply,] "O no, no, and once again, no!" In pure love, there is room for everything: the highest praise and the deepest adoration, yet the soul is immersed in Him in deepest peace through love; and the words of people, speaking from the exterior, have no effect upon that soul. What they tell the soul about God is but a pale shadow in comparison to its own experience of Him; and it is often surprised how other people can be struck with admiration at what someone else says about God when, for this soul, it is nothing special, as it knows that what can be put into words **(294)** is not yet that great. So this soul listens to everything with respect, but has its own special life in God.

948 February 13, [1937]. Today, during the Passion Service,¹⁷⁰ I saw Jesus being tortured and crowned with thorns and holding a reed in His hand. Jesus was silent as the soldiers were bustling about, vying with each other in torturing Him. Jesus said nothing, but just looked at me, and in that gaze I felt His pain, so terrible that we have not the faintest idea of how much He suffered for us before He was crucified. My soul was filled with pain and longing; in my soul, I felt great hatred for sin, and even the smallest infidelity on my part seemed to me like a huge mountain for which I must expiate by mortification and penance. When I see Jesus tormented, my heart is torn to pieces, and I think: what will become of sinners if they do not take advantage of the Passion of Jesus: In His Passion, I see a whole sea of mercy.

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(295) J.M.J. February 12, 1937

+ God's Love is the flower — Mercy the fruit.

949 Let the doubting soul read these considerations on Divine Mercy and become trusting.¹⁷¹

Divine Mercy, gushing forth from the bosom of the Father, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, greatest attribute of God, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, incomprehensible mystery, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, fount gushing forth from the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, unfathomed by any intellect, human or angelic, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, from which wells forth all life and happiness, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, better than the heavens, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, source of miracles and wonders, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, encompassing the whole universe, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, descending to earth in the Person of the Incarnate Word, I trust in You.

(296) Divine Mercy, which flowed out from the open wound of the Heart of Jesus, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, enclosed in the Heart of Jesus for us, and especially for sinners, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, unfathomed in the institution of the Sacred Host, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, in the founding of Holy Church, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, in our justification through Jesus Christ, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, accompanying us through our whole life, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, embracing us especially at the hour of death, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, endowing us with immortal life, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, accompanying us every moment of our life, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, shielding us from the fire of hell, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, in the conversion of hardened sinners, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, astonishment for Angels, incomprehensible to Saints, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, unfathomed in all the mysteries of God, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, lifting us out of every misery, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, source of our happiness and joy, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, in calling us forth from nothingness to existence, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, embracing all the works of His hands, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, crown of all of God's handiwork, I trust in You.

(297) Divine Mercy, in which we are all immersed, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, sweet relief for anguished hearts, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, only hope of despairing souls, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, repose of hearts, peace amidst fear, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, delight and ecstasy of holy souls, I trust in You.

Divine Mercy, inspiring hope against all hope, I trust in You.

950 + Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself.

951 + O incomprehensible and limitless Mercy Divine, To extol and adore You worthily, who can?

Supreme attribute of Almighty God,

You are the sweet hope for sinful man.

Into one hymn yourselves unite, stars, earth and sea, and in one accord, thankfully and fervently sing of the incomprehensible Divine Mercy.

952 **(298)** My Jesus, You see that Your holy will is everything to me. It makes no difference to me what You do with me. You command me to set to work — and I begin calmly, although I know that I am incapable of it; through Your representatives, You order me to wait — so I wait patiently; You fill my soul with enthusiasm — but You do not make it possible for me to act; You attract me to Yourself in heaven — and You leave me in this world; You pour into my soul a great yearning for Yourself — and You hide Yourself from me. I am dying of the desire to be united with You forever, and You do not let death come near me. O will of God, you are the nourishment and delight of my soul. When I submit to the holy will of my God, a deep peace floods my soul.

O my Jesus, You do not give a reward for the successful performance of

a work, but for the good will and the labor undertaken. Therefore, I am completely at peace, even if all my undertakings and efforts should be thwarted or should come to naught. If I do (299) all that is in my power, the rest is not my business. And therefore the greatest storms do not disturb the depths of my peace; the will of God dwells in my conscience.

953 + February 15, 1937. Today my suffering increased somewhat: I not only feel greater pain all through my lungs, but also some strange pains in my intestines. I am suffering as much as my weak nature can bear, all for immortal souls, to plead the mercy of God for poor sinners and to beg for strength for priests. Oh, how much reverence I have for priests; and I am asking Jesus, the High Priest, to grant them many graces.

954 Today after Holy Communion, the Lord told me, **My daughter, My delight is to unite myself with you. It is when you submit yourself to My will that you give Me the greatest glory and draw down upon yourself a sea of blessings. I would not take such special delight in you if you were not living by my will.** O my sweet Guest, I am prepared for all sacrifices for Your sake, but You know (300) that I am weakness itself. Nevertheless, with You I can do all things. O my Jesus, I beseech You, be with me at each instant.

955 February 15, 1937. Today, I heard these words in my soul: **Host pleasing to My Father, know, My daughter, that the entire Holy Trinity finds Its special delight in you, because you live exclusively by the will of God. No sacrifice can compare with this.**

956 + After these words, the knowledge of God's will came to me; that is to say, I now see everything from a higher point of view and accept all events and things, pleasant and unpleasant, with love, as tokens of the heavenly Father's special affection.

957 The pure offering of my will will burn on the altar of love. That my sacrifice may be perfect, I unite myself closely with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. When great sufferings will cause my nature to tremble, and my physical and spiritual strength will diminish, then will I hide myself deep in the open wound of the Heart (301) of Jesus, silent as a dove, without complaint. Let all my desires, even the holiest, noblest and most beautiful, take always the last place and Your holy will, the very first.

The least of Your desires, O Lord, is more precious to me than heaven, with all its treasures. I know very well that people will not understand me; that is why my sacrifice will be purer in Your eyes.

958 Some days ago, a certain person came to me and asked me to pray for her intention, as she had some urgent and important business. All of a sudden, I felt in my soul that this matter was not pleasing to God, and I replied that I would not pray for this intention, “but I will pray for you, in general” [I added]. A few days later, this lady came back to me and thanked me for not having prayed for her intention, but rather for her, because she had been motivated by a spirit of revenge toward a certain person to whom she owed respect and veneration in virtue **(302)** of the fourth commandment. The Lord Jesus had changed her interior [dispositions], and she herself acknowledged her guilt; but was, however, surprised that I had penetrated her secret.

959 + Today I received a letter from Father Sopocko, who sent me greetings for my feast day [February 15]. His greetings gave me joy, but his poor health made me sad. I had known about this by interior intuition, but had not quite believed it. But it seems to me that if he himself wrote that this was so, then the other things about which he did not write are also true, and my interior knowledge has not deceived me. He requested me to underline all that I know does not come from me; that is to say, all that Jesus tells me which I hear in my soul.¹⁷² He has already asked me to do this several times, but I did not have the time and, to tell the truth, I was in no hurry to do so. But how does he know that I have not done this? I was very surprised; but now I am setting about this work with all my heart. O my Jesus, Your representative’s will is clearly Your holy will, without a shadow of a doubt.

960 **(303)** February 16, 1937. Today I entered a neighboring room by mistake and so, for a while, I talked with the person who was there. When I returned to my own room, I thought about that person for a few moments. Then suddenly, Jesus stood by my side and said, **My daughter, what are you thinking about right now?** Without thinking, I snuggled close to His heart, because I realized that I had been thinking too much about creatures.

961 + This morning after completing my spiritual exercises, I began at once

to crochet. I sensed a stillness in my heart; I sensed that Jesus was resting in it. That deep and sweet consciousness of God's presence prompted me to say to the Lord, "O Most Holy Trinity dwelling in my heart, I beg You: grant the grace of conversion to as many souls as the [number of] stitches that I will make today with this crochet hook." Then I heard these words in my soul: **My daughter, too great are your demands.** "Jesus, You know that for You it is easier to grant much rather than a little." **That is so, it is less difficult for Me to grant a soul much rather than a little, but every conversion of a sinful soul demands sacrifice.** "Well, Jesus, I offer You (304) this whole-hearted work of mine; this offering does not seem to me to be too small for such a large number of souls; You know, Jesus, that for thirty years You were saving souls by just this kind of work. And since holy obedience forbids me to perform great penances and mortifications, therefore I ask You, Lord: accept these mere nothings stamped with the seal of obedience as great things." Then I heard a voice in my soul: **My dear daughter, I comply with your request.**

962 + I often see a certain person dear to God. The Lord has great love for him, not only because he is striving to spread the veneration of God's mercy, but also because of the love he has for the Lord God, although he does not always feel this love in his own heart and is almost always in Gethsemane. However, this person is always pleasing to God, and his great patience will overcome all difficulties.

963 + Oh, if only the suffering soul knew how it is loved by God, it would die of joy and excess of happiness! Some day, we will know the value of suffering, but then we will no longer be able to suffer. The present moment is ours.

964 (305) February 17, 1937, This morning during Holy Mass, I saw the Suffering Jesus. His Passion was imprinted on my body in an invisible manner, but no less painfully.

965 Jesus looked at me and said, **Souls perish in spite of My bitter Passion. I am giving them the last hope of salvation; that is, the Feast of My Mercy¹⁷³. If they will not adore My mercy, they will perish for all eternity. Secretary of My mercy, write, tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice, is near.**

966 + Today, I heard in my soul these words: **My daughter, it is time for you to take action; I am with you. Great persecutions and sufferings are in store for you, but be comforted by the thought that many souls will be saved and sanctified by this work.**

967 + When I set to work at underlining the Lord's words and thus was going through everything in sequence, I reached the page where I had marked down Father Andrasz's advice and directions. I did not know what to do, to underline or not to underline, and then I heard these words in my soul: **Underline, because these words are Mine; I have borrowed the lips (306) of the friend of My Heart in order to speak to you and reassure you. You are to observe these directions until your death. It would not please Me at all if you were to disobey these directions. Know that it is I who have placed him between Myself and your soul. I am doing this to set you at peace and so that you may not err.**

968 **Since I have placed you in this priest's special care, you are thus exempted from giving a detailed account to your superiors concerning My relationship with you. In all other matters, be as a child with your superiors, but whatever I do in the depths of your soul is to be told, with all frankness, only to the priests.**

And I have noticed that, from the time God gave me a spiritual director, He has not required me to report everything to the superiors, as was the case before, but only that which concerns external matters; apart from this, only the director knows my soul. To have a spiritual director is a special grace of God. Oh, how few have received it! The soul remains in constant peace amidst the greatest difficulties. Every day after Holy Communion, I thank the Lord Jesus for this grace, and every (307) day I ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten him. I have truly experienced in my soul what power the director's words have. Blessed be God's mercy for this grace!

969 + Today, I went to meditate before the Blessed Sacrament [in the sanatorium chapel]. When I approached the altar, God's presence pervaded my soul, I was plunged into the ocean of His divinity, and Jesus said to me, **My daughter, all that exists is yours.** I answered the Lord, 'My heart wants nothing but You alone, O Treasure of my heart. For all

the gifts You give me, thank you, O Lord, but I desire only Your Heart. Though the heavens are immense, they are nothing to me without You. You know very well, O Jesus, that I am constantly swooning because of my longing for You.” **Know this, My daughter, that you are already tasting now what other souls will obtain only in eternity.**

970 And all of a sudden, my soul was flooded with the light of the knowledge of God. Oh, would that I could express even a little of what my soul experiences when resting near the Heart of the incomprehensible **(308)** Majesty! I cannot put it into words. Only a soul who has experienced such a grace at least once in his life, will recognize it. When I returned to my room, it seemed to me that I was coming from real life to death. When the doctor came to take my pulse, he was surprised: “Sister, what happened? You have never had a pulse like this! I would like to know what has speeded it up so much.” What could I tell him, when I myself did not know that my pulse was so rapid. I only know that I am dying of yearning for God, but this I did not tell him, for how can medicine help in this instance?

971 February 19, 1937. Contact with the dying. They ask me for prayer, and I can pray, as the Lord grants me an extraordinary spirit of prayer. I am constantly united with Him, and I am fully aware that I live for souls in order to bring them to Your mercy, O Lord. In this matter, no sacrifice is too insignificant.

972 **(309)** Today, the doctor decided that I am to stay here until April. It is God’s will, even though I did want to be back in the company of my sisters.

973 I learned today about the death of one of our sisters¹⁷⁴ who died in Plock, but she visited me even before they told me about her death.

974 February 22, 1937. Today, there began in our chapel a retreat for the hospital attendants, although anyone who wishes may take part in it. There is one conference a day. Father Bonaventure¹⁷⁵ speaks for a whole hour, and he speaks directly to souls. I took part in this retreat, as I very much desire to know God more deeply and to love Him more ardently, for I have understood that the greater the knowledge, the stronger the love.

975 Today I heard these words: **Pray for souls that they be not afraid to approach the tribunal of My mercy. Do not grow weary of praying for sinners. You know what a burden their souls are to My Heart. Relieve My deathly sorrow; dispense My mercy.**

976 **(310)** February 24, 1937. Today during Holy Mass, I saw the dying Jesus. The sufferings of the Lord pierced my soul and body in an invisible manner. The pain is enormous, though it lasts a very short time.

977 During the singing of the Lenten Lamentations, I am so taken up with His Passion that I cannot withhold my tears. I would like to hide somewhere in order to give myself freely to the sorrow which flows from the consideration of His Passion.

978 When I was praying for the intention of Father Andrasz, I learned how very pleasing he is to God. Since then, I have had even greater respect for him, as for a saint. This has given me great joy, and I thank God fervently for it.

979 Today at Benediction, I saw Jesus, and He spoke these words to me: **Be obedient to your director in everything; his word is My will. Be certain in the depths of your soul that it is I who am speaking through his lips, and I desire that you reveal the state of your soul to him with the same simplicity (311) and candor as you have with Me. I say it again, My daughter: know that his word is My will for you.**

980 Today, I saw the Lord in great beauty, and He said to me, **My loving host, pray for priests, especially during this time of harvest. My Heart is pleased with you, and for your sake I am blessing the earth.**

981 I understood that these two years of interior suffering which I have undergone in submission to God's will in order to know it better have advanced me further in perfection than the previous ten years. For two years now, I have been on the cross between heaven and earth. That is to say, I am bound by the vow of obedience and must obey the Superior as God Himself. And on the other hand, God makes His will known to me directly, and so my inner torture is so great that no one **(312)** will either understand or imagine these spiritual sufferings. It seems to me that it would be easier to give up my life than to go again and again through one

hour of such pain. I am not even going to write much about this matter, because one cannot describe what it is like to know God's will directly and at the same time to be perfectly obedient to the divine will as expressed indirectly through the superiors. Thanks be to God that He has given me a director; otherwise, I would not have advanced one single step.

982 + I recently received a lovely letter from my dear seventeen-year-old sister [Wanda¹⁷⁶]. She is begging and entreating me to help her enter the convent. She is ready for any sacrifices for God. I can tell from her letter that the Lord Himself is guiding her, and I rejoice in God's great mercy.

983 + Today, the Majesty of God enveloped and transpierced my soul to its very depths. The greatness of God is pervading my being and flooding me so that I am completely drowning in His greatness. I am dissolving and disappearing entirely in Him as in my life-source, as in perfect life.

984 **(313)** My Jesus, I understand well that my perfection consists not in the fact that You command me to carry out these great works of Yours — Oh no! — the soul's greatness does not consist in this, but in great love for You. O Jesus, in the depths of my soul I understand that the greatest achievements cannot compare with one act of pure love for You. I desire to be faithful to You and to do Your bidding. I am making use of my strength and my reason to carry out all You are asking of me, O Lord, but I have not the least shadow of attachment to all this. I do it all because such is Your will. All my love is drowned, not in Your works, but in You Yourself, O my Creator and Lord!

985 February 25, 1937. I prayed earnestly for a happy death on behalf of a certain soul who was suffering much. For two weeks, she had remained between life and death. I was touched with pity for her and said to the Lord, "Sweet Jesus, if the works I am undertaking for Your glory are pleasing to You, then please take her to Yourself **(314)** and let her rest in Your mercy." I was strangely reassured; and, after a short while, they came to tell me that the person who had been suffering so much had just died.

986 I saw a certain priest [probably Father Sopocko] in need and prayed for him until Jesus looked upon him with kindness and granted him His

strength.

987 Today, I came to know that a member of my family is offending God and is in great peril of death. This knowledge pierced my soul with such great pain that I thought I would not survive that offense against God. I begged God's pardon, but I saw His great anger.

988 I was praying for a certain priest [probably Father Sopocko], asking God to help him in certain matters when I suddenly saw Jesus Crucified. His eyes were closed, and He was immersed in torture. I worshiped His five wounds, each one separately, and asked His blessing for him. Jesus gave me to know interiorly how dear that soul was to Him, **(315)** and I felt that grace was flowing from Jesus' wounds upon that soul who, like Jesus, is also stretched upon the cross.

989 My Lord and my God, You know that it is You alone whom my soul has come to love. My soul is entirely drowned in You, O Lord. Even if I did not accomplish any of the things that You have made known to me, O Lord, I would be completely at peace because I would have done what I could.

990 I know well, O Lord, that You have no need of our works; You demand love. Love, love and once again, love of God — there is nothing greater in heaven or on earth. The greatest greatness is to love God; true greatness is in loving God; real wisdom is to love God. All that is great and beautiful is in God; there is no beauty or greatness outside of Him. O you sages of the world and you great minds, recognize that true greatness is in loving God! Oh, how astonished I am that some people deceive themselves, saying: There is no eternity!

991 **(316)** February 26, 1937. Today, I saw how the Holy Mysteries were being celebrated without liturgical vestments and in private homes, because of a passing storm; and I saw the sun come out from the Blessed Sacrament, and all other lights went out, or rather, they were dimmed; and all the people were looking toward this [one] light. But at the present time I do not understand the meaning of this vision.^{[177](#)}

992 + I am going forward through life amidst rainbows and storms, but with my head held high with pride, for I am a royal child. I feel that the blood

of Jesus is circulating in my veins, and I have put my trust in the great mercy of the Lord.

993 + I asked the Lord to have a certain person come to visit me today so that I could see her one more time, and that would be a sign for me that she was being called to the convent which Jesus is having me establish. And, O wonder, the person in question came, and I tried to form her a bit, spiritually. I began to show her the way of self-denial and sacrifice, which she readily accepted. However, I have placed this whole matter in the hands of the Lord, that He may direct everything according to His good pleasure.

994 **(317)** Today, when I heard the hymn, “Good night, Holy Head of My Jesus,” on the radio, my spirit was suddenly drowned in God, and divine love flooded my soul; I dwelt for a moment with the heavenly Father.

995 + Although it is not easy to live in constant agony,
To be nailed to the cross of various pains,
Still, I am inflamed with love by loving,
And like a Seraph I love God, though I am but weakness.

Oh, great is the soul that, midst suffering,
Stands faithfully by God and does His will
And remains uncomfited midst great rainbows and storms,
For God’s pure love sweetens her fate.

It is no great thing to love God in prosperity
And thank Him when all goes well,
But rather to adore Him midst great adversities
And love Him for His own sake and place one’s hope in Him.

When the soul is in the shadows of Gethsemane,
All alone in the bitterness of pain,
(318) It ascends toward the heights of Jesus,
And though ever drinking bitterness — it is not sad.

When the soul does the will of the Most High God,
Even amidst constant pain and torments,
Having pressed its lips to the chalice proffered,
It becomes mighty, and nothing will daunt it.

Though tortured, it repeats: Your will be done,
Patiently awaiting the moment of its transfiguration,
For, though in deepest darkness, it hears the voice of Jesus: You are
Mine,
And this it will know fully when the veil falls.

996 February 28, 1937. Today, I was undergoing the Passion of Jesus for a longer time, and thus I saw that many souls were in need of prayer. I feel that I am being completely transformed into prayer in order to beg God's mercy for every soul. O my Jesus, I am receiving You into my heart as a pledge of mercy for souls.

997 This evening, when I heard the hymn, "Good night, Holy Head of my Jesus," on the radio, my spirit was suddenly swept away to God's mysterious bosom, and I knew **(319)** in what the greatness of a soul consists and what matters to God: love, love, and once again, love. And I understood how all that exists is saturated with God, and such a love of God inundated my soul that I am at a loss to describe it. Happy the soul that knows how to love unreservedly, for in this lies its greatness.

998 Today, I took part in a one-day retreat. When I was at the last conference,¹⁷⁸ the priest was speaking of how much the world needs God's mercy, and that this seems to be a special time when people have great need of prayer and God's mercy. Then I heard a voice in my soul: These words are for you. Do all you possibly can for this work of My mercy. I desire that My mercy be worshiped, and I am giving mankind the last hope of salvation; that is, recourse to My mercy. My Heart rejoices in this feast. After these words, I understood that nothing can dispense me from the obligation which the Lord demands from me.

999 Last night I was in such pain that I thought it was the end. The doctors could not diagnose what the sickness was. **(320)** I felt as if my entrails had been torn to shreds, but after a few hours of such sufferings I am all right. All this is for sinners. Let Your mercy descend upon them, O Lord.

1000 In the terrible desert of life,
O my sweetest Jesus,
Protect souls from disaster,
For You are the Fountain of Mercy.

Let the resplendence of Your rays,
O sweet Commander of our souls,
Let mercy change the world.
And you who have received this grace, serve Jesus.

Steep is the great highway I must travel,
But I fear nothing,
For the pure fount of mercy is flowing for my sake,
And, with it, strength for the humble soul.

I am exhausted and worn out,
But my conscience bears me witness
That I do all for the greater glory of the Lord,
The Lord who is my repose and my heritage.

[End of Notebook Two of the Diary.]

*Sister Faustina of the Blessed
Sacrament*

*Congregation of the Sisters of Our
Lady of Mercy*

I shall Sing the Lord's Mercy

NOTEBOOK III

(1)+
J.M.J.

1001 Thank You, O Lord, my Master,
That You have transformed me entirely into Yourself,
And accompany me through life's toils and labors;
I fear nothing when I have You in my heart.

+
J. M. J.

1002 The Lord's Supper is laid,
Jesus sits down at table with His Apostles,
His Being all transformed into love,
For such was the Holy Trinity's counsel.

With great desire, I desire to eat with you, Before I suffer death.
About to leave you, love holds Me in your midst.
He sheds His Blood, gives His life, for He loves immensely.

Love hides beneath the appearance of bread,
Departing, He remains with us.
Such self-abasement was not needed,
Yet burning love hid Him under these species.

Over the bread and wine He says these words:
"This is My Blood, this is My Body."
Although mysterious, these are words of love.
Then He passes the Cup among His disciples.

Jesus grew deeply troubled within
And said, "One of you will betray his Master."
They fell silent, with a silence as of the tomb,
And John inclined his head on His breast.

The supper is ended.
Let us go to Gethsemane.
Love is satisfied,
And there the traitor is waiting.

(2)+
J.M.J.

1003 O Divine Will, You are my nourishment, You are my delight. Hasten,
O Lord, the Feast of Mercy that souls may recognize the fountain of Your
goodness.

God and souls.

Sister M. Faustina
of the Blessed Sacrament.

Cracow, March 1, 1937.

1004 O will of the Omnipotent God,
You are my delight,
You are my joy.
Whatever the hand of my Lord holds out to me
I will accept with gladness, submission and love.

Your holy will is my repose;
In it is contained all my sanctity,
And all my eternal salvation,
For doing God's will is the greatest glory.

The will of God — those are His various wishes
Which my soul carries out without reserve,
Because such are His divine desires,
In those moments when God shares His confidences with me.

Do with me as You will, Lord.
I place no obstacles, I make no reservations.
For You are my whole delight and the love of my soul,
And to You, in turn, I pour out the confidences of my heart.

+

(3) J. M. J. Cracow, March 1, 1937.
+ Third Notebook

God and Souls.

1005 Let the glory and praise to The Divine Mercy rise from every creature
throughout all ages and times.

1006 + O my Lord and God, You command me to write about the graces You grant me. O my Jesus, were it not for a clear command from my confessors,¹⁷⁹ that I am to write down what goes on in my soul, I would not, of my own choice, write a single word. And so, if I do write about myself, it is at the formal command of holy obedience.

1007 + Praise and glory be to You, O Holy Trinity, Eternal God. May the mercy springing from your very bowels protect us from Your just anger. Let the praise of Your incomprehensible mercy resound everywhere. All Your works bear the seal of Your unfathomable mercy, O God.

1008 March 1, 1937. The Lord gave me to know how displeased He is with a talkative soul. **I find no rest in such a soul. The constant din tires Me, and in the midst of it the soul cannot discern My voice.**

1009 Today I asked the Lord Jesus to let me meet with a certain person, and this would be a sign for me that He is calling her to this convent [which I am to found]. And I did meet her and understood that this soul has a vocation, and I asked the Lord to deign to form her Himself. I have talked to her often about a vocation; the Lord will do the rest.

1010 (4) + March 5, 1937. Today, I experienced the Passion of the Lord Jesus in my own body for a long while. The pain is very great, but all this is for the sake of immortal souls.

1011 Today, the Lord visited me, pressed me to His Heart and said, **Rest, My little child. I am always with you.**

1012 + March 8, 1937. Today, as I was praying for the intention of Father Andrasz, I suddenly understood how intimately this soul communed with God and how pleasing he was to the Lord. It gave me immense joy, because I desire intensely that all souls be united with God as closely as possible.

1013 + During prayer today, my soul was overcome with such a strong desire to begin the work, that I could not restrain my enthusiasm. Oh, how ardently I desire that the souls in this Congregation present themselves before the throne of God and continuously implore His incomprehensible mercy on behalf of the whole world, praising and glorifying this unfathomable mercy of God. A mysterious force is driving me to action.

1014 March 12, 1937. I saw the weariness of a certain priest [probably Father Sopocko] for whom the Lord has traced out a hard and difficult road; but the fruits of his work are alive. May God give us many such souls, capable of loving Him in the midst of the greatest torments.

1015 + I felt today how greatly a certain dying soul desired prayers. I prayed until I felt she had died. Oh, dying souls are in such great need of prayer! O Jesus, inspire souls to pray often for the dying.

1016 (5) March 15, 1937. Today, I entered into the bitterness of the Passion of the Lord Jesus. I suffered in a purely spiritual way. I learned how horrible sin was. God gave me to know the whole hideousness of sin. I learned in the depths of my soul how horrible sin was, even the smallest sin, and how much it tormented the soul of Jesus. I would rather suffer a thousand hells than commit even the smallest venial sin.

1017 The Lord said to me, **I want to give Myself to souls and to fill them with My love, but few there are who want to accept all the graces My love has intended for them. My grace is not lost; if the soul for whom it was intended does not accept it, another soul takes it.**

1018 I frequently feel that certain persons are praying for me. I experience this suddenly in my soul, but I do not always know which person is interceding for me. I also know when some person has trouble because of something that has to do with me; of this too I am inwardly aware, even though the distance [that separates us] is very great.^{[180](#)}

1019 March 18, 1937. I have come to know that I have received a certain grace that brings me into great intimacy and communion with the Lord. He gives me to know this by means of an interior light. He allows me to know His greatness and holiness and how graciously He lowers Himself to me. He gives me an exclusive knowledge of His love for me, and of how He is Lord of absolutely all things, and also of how He gives Himself to a soul while suspending all the laws of nature. He acts as He wills.

1020 I understand the spiritual espousal of a soul with God, which has no exterior manifestation. It is a purely interior act between the soul and God. This grace has drawn me into the very burning center of God's love.

I have come to understand His Trinitarian Quality and the absolute Oneness of His Being. This grace is different from all other graces. It is so extremely spiritual that my inaccurate description knows not how to express even a shade of it.

1021 (6) + I have such a strong desire to hide myself that I would like to live as though I did not exist. I feel a strange inner urge to hide myself as deeply as possible so as to be known only to the Heart of Jesus. I want to be a quiet little dwelling place for Jesus to rest in. I shall admit nothing that might awaken my Beloved. My concealment gives me a chance to commune constantly and exclusively with my Bridegroom. I commune with creatures in so far as it is pleasing to Him. My heart has come to love the Lord with the full force of love, and I know no other love, because it is from the beginning that my soul has sunk deeply in the Lord as in its only treasure.

1022 + Although outwardly I meet with many sufferings and various adversities, this does not, however, lessen my interior life for a moment nor disturb my inner silence. I do not fear at all being abandoned by creatures because, even if all abandoned me, I would not be alone, for the Lord is with me. And even if the Lord were to hide, love will know how to find Him. For love knows no gates or guards; even the keen-eyed Cherub himself, with his flaming sword, will not stop love; it will work its way through wilderness and scorching heat, through storm, thunder and darkness, and will reach the source from which it came, and there it will endure forever. All things will come to an end; but love, never.

1023 + Today, I received some oranges. When the sister had left, I thought to myself, "Should I eat the oranges instead of doing penance and mortifying myself during Holy Lent? After all, I am feeling a bit better." Then I heard a voice in my soul: **My daughter, you please Me more by eating the oranges out of obedience and love of Me than by fasting and mortifying yourself of your own will. A soul that loves Me very much must, ought to live by My will. I know your heart, and I know that it will not be satisfied by anything but My love alone.**

1024 (7) + I would not know how to live without the Lord. Jesus often visits me in this seclusion, teaches me, reassures me, rebukes me, and admonishes me. He Himself forms my heart according to His divine

wishes and likings, but always with much goodness and mercy. Our hearts are fused as one.

1025 March 19, 1937. Today, I united myself in spirit with the Adoration that is taking place in our house [40-hour Adoration in Cracow], but my soul was full of torments, and some strange kind of apprehension was piercing my heart. Because of this, I redoubled my prayers. Suddenly I saw the gaze of God reaching into the depths of my heart.

1026 As I sat down to a very tasty breakfast, I said to the Lord, "Thank you for these gifts, but my heart is dying of longing for You, and nothing earthly is tasty to me. I desire the food of Your love."

1027 Today I was drawn by some mysterious force to act. I must resist this attraction, or else I would follow it at once.

1028 March 21, 1937. Palm Sunday. During Mass, my soul was steeped in the bitterness and suffering of Jesus. Jesus gave me to understand how much He had suffered in that triumphal procession. "Hosanna" was reverberating in Jesus' heart as an echo of "Crucify." Jesus allowed me to feel this in a special way.

1029 The doctor did not allow me to go to the chapel to attend the Passion Service, although I had a great desire for it; however, I prayed in my own room. Suddenly I heard the bell in the next room, and I went in and rendered a service to a seriously sick person. **(8)** When I returned to my room, I suddenly saw the Lord Jesus, who said, **My daughter, you gave Me greater pleasure by rendering Me that service than if you had prayed for a long time.** I answered, "But it was not to You, Jesus, but to that patient that I rendered this service." And the Lord answered me, **Yes, My daughter, but whatever you do for your neighbor, you do for Me.**

1030 + O my Jesus, give me wisdom, give me a mind great and enlightened by Your light, and this only, that I may know You better, O Lord. For the better I get to know You, the more ardently will I love You, the sole object of my love. In You my soul drowns, in You my heart dissolves. I know not how to love partially, but only with the full strength of my soul and the total ardor of my heart. You Yourself, O Lord, have enkindled this love of mine for You; in You my heart has drowned forever.

1031 March 22, 1937. As I was talking, today, to a certain person, I recognized that she was suffering greatly in spirit, although exteriorly she pretended that she was very happy and was not suffering at all. I felt inspired to tell her that what was troubling her was a temptation. When I disclosed to her what was torturing her, she burst into tears and told me that she had come to see me precisely to speak to me, because she felt that it would bring her relief. The suffering was of such a kind that the soul was being attracted by God's grace on the one hand and by the world on the other. She was going through a terrible struggle that brought her to the point of weeping like a little child. But she went away soothed and set at peace.

1032 + During Holy Mass, I saw the Lord Jesus nailed upon the cross amidst great torments. A soft moan issued from His Heart. After some time, He said, **I thirst. I thirst for the salvation of souls. Help Me, My daughter, to save souls. Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the heavenly Father for sinners.**

1033 (9) + When I see that the burden is beyond my strength, I do not consider or analyze it or probe into it, but I run like a child to the Heart of Jesus and say only one word to Him: "You can do all things." And then I keep silent, because I know that Jesus Himself will intervene in the matter, and as for me, instead of tormenting myself, I use that time to love Him.

1034 Monday of Holy Week. I asked the Lord to let me take part in His Sorrowful Passion that I might experience in soul and body, to the extent that this is possible for a creature, His bitter Passion. I asked to experience all the bitterness, in so far as this was possible. And the Lord answered that He would give me this grace, and that on Thursday, after Holy Communion, He would grant this in a special way.

1035 + This evening, a certain young man was dying; he was suffering terribly. For his intention, I began to say the chaplet which the Lord had taught me. I said it all, but the agony continued. I wanted to start the Litany of the Saints, but suddenly I heard the words, **Say the chaplet.** I understood that the soul needed the special help of prayers and great mercy. And so I locked myself in my room and fell prostrate before God and begged for mercy upon that soul. Then I felt the great majesty of God

and His great justice. I trembled with fear, but did not stop begging the Lord's mercy for that soul. Then I took the cross off my breast, the crucifix I had received when making my vows,¹⁸¹ and I put it on the chest of the dying man and said to the Lord, "Jesus, look on this soul with the same love with which You looked on my holocaust on the day of my perpetual vows, and by the power of the promise which You made to me in respect to the dying and those who would invoke Your mercy on them, [grant this man the grace of a happy death]." His suffering then ceased, and he died peacefully. Oh, how much we should pray for the dying! Let us take advantage of mercy while there is still time for mercy.

1036 **(10)** + I realize more and more how much every soul needs God's mercy throughout life and particularly at the hour of death. This chaplet mitigates God's anger, as He Himself told me.

1037 + I find myself so weak that were it not for Holy Communion I would fall continually. One thing alone sustains me, and that is Holy Communion. From it I draw my strength; in it is all my comfort. I fear life on days when I do not receive Holy Communion. I fear my own self. Jesus concealed in the Host is everything to me. From the tabernacle I draw strength, power, courage and light. Here, I seek consolation in time of anguish. I would not know how to give glory to God if I did not have the Eucharist in my heart.

1038 + My beloved native land, Poland, if you only knew how many sacrifices and prayers I offer to God for you! But be watchful and give glory to God, who lifts you up and singles you out in a special way. But know how to be grateful.

1039 + I suffer great pain at the sight of the sufferings of others. All these sufferings are reflected in my heart. I carry their torments in my heart so that it even wears me out physically. I would like all pains to fall upon me so as to bring relief to my neighbor.

1040 Amid terrible torments, I fix my eyes on You, my God, and though a storm is gathering over my head, I know that the sun is not extinguished. Nor do I wonder at the deceitfulness of creatures, but I accept in advance whatever may happen. My lips are silent, while my ears are satiated with derision. I strive for silence in my heart amidst the greatest sufferings,

and I protect myself against all attacks with the shield of Your Name.

1041 **(11)** An ardent desire for this Feast¹⁸² is burning up my whole soul. In fervent prayer for the hastening of the Feast I find some relief, and I have begun a novena for the intention of certain priests that God may grant them light and inspiration to apply for the promulgation of this Feast, and that the Spirit of God inspire the Holy Father regarding the entire matter.

The novena consists of an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. I have implored God to hasten this Feast and have asked the Holy Spirit to inspire certain people regarding this whole matter. I am finishing this novena on Holy Thursday.

1042 + March 23, 1937. Today is the seventh day of the novena. I have received a great and inconceivable grace: the Most Merciful Jesus has promised that I will be present at the celebration of this solemn Feast.

1043 This day, the 23rd, that is, Tuesday of Holy Week, is a day on which the Lord has granted me many graces.

1044 Suddenly, God's presence took hold of me, and at once I saw myself in Rome, in the Holy Father's chapel and at the same time I was in our chapel. And the celebration of the Holy Father and the entire Church was closely connected with our chapel and, in a very special way, with our Congregation. And I took part in the solemn celebration simultaneously here and in Rome, for the celebration was so closely connected with Rome that, even as I write, I cannot distinguish the two but I am writing it down as I saw it. I saw the Lord Jesus in our chapel, exposed in the monstrance on the high altar. The chapel was adorned as for a feast, and on that day anyone who wanted to come was allowed in.¹⁸³ The crowd was so enormous that the eye could not take it all in. Everyone was participating in the celebrations with great joy, and many of them obtained what they desired. **(12)** The same celebration was held in Rome, in a beautiful church, and the Holy Father, with all the clergy, was celebrating this Feast, and then suddenly I saw Saint Peter, who stood between the altar and the Holy Father. I could not hear what Saint Peter said but I saw that the Holy Father understood his words....

1045 Then some clergymen whom I did not know began to examine me and

to humiliate me,¹⁸⁴ or rather, what I had written; but I saw how Jesus Himself was defending me and giving them to understand what they did not know.

1046 Then suddenly, I saw how the two rays, as painted in the image, issued from the Host and spread over the whole world. This lasted only a moment, but it seemed as though it had lasted all day, and our chapel was overcrowded all day long, and the whole day abounded in joy.

1047 Then suddenly I saw on our altar the living Lord Jesus, just as He is depicted in the image. Yet I felt that the sisters and all the people did not see the Lord Jesus as I saw Him. Jesus looked with great kindness and joy at the Holy Father, at certain priests, at the entire clergy, at the people and at our Congregation.

1048 Then, in an instant, I was caught up to stand near Jesus, and I stood on the altar next to the Lord Jesus, and my spirit was filled with a happiness so great that I am unable to comprehend it or write about it. A profound peace as well as repose filled my soul. Jesus bent toward me and said with great kindness, **What is it you desire, My daughter?** And I answered, “I desire worship and glory be given to Your mercy.” **I already am receiving worship by the institution and celebration of this Feast; what else do you desire?** I then looked at the immense crowd worshipping The Divine Mercy and I said to the Lord, “Jesus, bless all those who are gathered to give glory to You and to venerate Your infinite mercy.” Jesus made a sign of the cross with His hand, and this blessing was reflected in the souls like a flash of light. **(13)** My spirit was engulfed in His love. I felt as if I had dissolved and disappeared completely in God. When I came to myself, a profound peace was flooding my soul, and an extraordinary understanding of many things was communicated to my intellect, an understanding that had not been granted me previously.

1049 I am immensely happy, although I am the least of all; and I would not change anything of what God has given me. I would not want to change places even with a Seraph, as regards the interior knowledge of God which He Himself has given me. The intimate knowledge I have of the Lord is such as no creature can comprehend, particularly, the depth of His mercy that envelops me. I am happy with everything You give me.

1050 March 24, 1937. Wednesday of Holy Week. My heart is languishing for God. I desire to become united with Him. A faint fear pierces my soul and at the same time a kind of flame of love sets my heart on fire. Love and suffering are united in my heart.

1051 I have felt great sufferings in my body, but I feel the Lord is upholding me, for otherwise I would not be able to bear it.

1052 O my Jesus, I beg You on behalf of the whole Church: Grant it love and the light of Your Spirit, and give power to the words of priests so that hardened hearts might be brought to repentance and return to You, O Lord. Lord, give us holy priests; You yourself maintain them in holiness. O Divine and Great High Priest, may the power of Your mercy accompany them everywhere and protect them from the devil's traps and snares which are continually being set for the souls of priests. May the power of Your mercy, O Lord, shatter and bring to naught all that might tarnish the sanctity of priests, for You can do all things.

1053 **(14)** March 25, 1937. Holy Thursday. During Holy Mass, I saw the Lord, who said to me, **Lean your head on My breast and rest.** The Lord pressed me to His Heart and said, **I shall give you a small portion of My Passion, but do not be afraid, be brave; do not seek relief, but accept everything with submission to My will.**

1054 When Jesus was taking leave of me, such great pain filled my soul that it is impossible to express it. Physical strength left me; I left the chapel quickly and went to bed. I was oblivious of what was going on around me. My soul was filled with longing for the Lord, and all the bitterness of His Divine Heart was imparted to me. This lasted for about three hours. I asked the Lord to protect me from the eyes of those around me. Although I wanted to, I could not take any food all day, until evening.

I earnestly desired to spend the whole night with Jesus in the dark prison cell.¹⁸⁵ I prayed until eleven o'clock. At eleven, the Lord said to me, Lie down and take your rest. I have let you experience in three hours what I suffered during the whole night. And immediately I went to bed.

I had no physical strength left; the suffering had deprived me of it completely. Throughout all this time, I had been in a sort of swoon. Every

beat of Jesus' Heart was reflected in my heart and pierced my soul. If these tortures had concerned me only, I would have suffered less; but as I looked at the One whom my heart has loved with all its might and saw that He was suffering, and that I could not bring Him any relief, my heart dissolved in love and bitterness. I was dying with Him, and yet I could not die. But I would not have exchanged that martyrdom for all the pleasures in the whole world. In the course of this suffering, my love grew immeasurably. I know that the Lord was supporting me with His omnipotence, for otherwise I would not have been able to endure it for even a moment. Together with Him, I underwent, in a special way, all the various tortures. The world still has no idea of all that Jesus suffered. **(15)** I accompanied Him to the Garden of Gethsemane; I stayed with Him in the prison; I went with Him before the judges; I underwent with Him each of the tortures. Not a single one of His movements or looks escaped my notice. I came to know all the omnipotence of His love and of His mercy toward souls.

1055 March 26, 1937. Friday. In the morning, I at once felt the torture of His five wounds in my body. This suffering continued until three o'clock. Although there is no outward sign of it, the torture is no less painful. I am glad that Jesus is protecting me from people's eyes.

1056 At eleven o'clock Jesus said to me, **My host, you are refreshment for My tormented Heart.** I thought, after these words, that my heart would burn up. And He brought me into such close intimacy with Himself that my heart was espoused to His Heart in a loving union, and I could feel the faintest stir of His Heart and He, of mine. The fire of my created love was joined to the ardor of His eternal love. This one grace surpasses all others in its immensity. His Trinitarian Being enveloped me entirely, and I am totally immersed in Him. My littleness is, as it were, wrestling with this Immortal Mighty One. I am immersed in incomprehensible love and incomprehensible torture because of His Passion. All that concerns His Being is imparted to me also.

1057 Up to now, Jesus has been bringing me to know about, and to have a presentiment of, this grace, but today He granted it to me. I would not even dare to dream about it. My heart is in ceaseless ecstasy, as it were, although outwardly nothing disturbs my contacts with my neighbor or my

attending to various matters. Nothing is capable of interrupting my ecstasy, nor can anyone suspect it, because I have asked God to protect me from detection by people. And, together with this grace, there entered my soul a whole ocean of light, enabling me to understand God and myself. Amazement overwhelms me entirely and leads me as if into a new ecstasy [aroused by the fact] that God has deigned to descend to me, who am so little.

1058 **(16)** + At three o'clock, I prayed prostrate, in the form of a cross, for the whole world. Jesus' mortal life was coming to an end. I heard His seven words; then He looked at me and said, **Beloved daughter of My Heart, you are My solace amidst terrible torments.**

1059 Jesus is commanding me to make a novena before the Feast of Mercy, and today I am to begin it for the conversion of the whole world and for the recognition of The Divine Mercy... **so that every soul will praise My goodness. I desire trust from My creatures. Encourage souls to place great trust in My fathomless mercy. Let the weak, sinful soul have no fear to approach Me, for even if it had more sins than there are grains of sand in the world, all would be drowned in the unmeasurable depths of My mercy.**

1060 When Jesus had given up His last breath, my soul dissolved from the pain, and for a long time I could not come to myself. I found some relief in tears. The One whom my heart had come to love has died. Will anyone understand my grief?

1061 In the evening, over the radio, I heard hymns; that is, psalms, sung by priests.¹⁸⁶ I burst into tears, and all of the pain was renewed in my soul, and I wept sorrowfully, unable to find appeasement in this pain. Then I heard a voice in my soul: Do not cry; I am not suffering any more. And for the faithfulness with which you accompanied Me in My sufferings and death, your own death will be a solemn one, and I will accompany you in that last hour. Beloved pearl of My Heart, I see your love so pure, purer than that of the angels, and all the more so because you keep fighting. For your sake I bless the world. I see your efforts to please Me, and they delight My Heart.

After these words, I wept no more, but thanked the heavenly Father for

having sent us His Son and for the work of the Redemption of mankind.

1062 **(17)** + I made an hour of adoration in thanksgiving for the graces which had been granted me and for my illness. Illness also is a great grace. I have been ill for four months, but I do not recall having wasted so much as a minute of it. All has been for God and souls; I want to be faithful to Him everywhere.

During this adoration, I realized the utter care and goodness that Jesus has been lavishing upon me and the protection He has given me against all evil. I thank You especially, Jesus, for visiting me in my solitude, and I thank You also for inspiring my superiors to send me for this treatment. Give them, Jesus, the omnipotence of Your blessing and compensate them for all the losses incurred because of me.

1063 Today, Jesus is bidding me to comfort and reassure a certain soul who has opened herself to me and told me about her difficulties. This soul is pleasing to the Lord, but she is not aware of it. God is keeping her in deep humility. I have carried out the Lord's directives.

1064 + O my most sweet Master, good Jesus, I give You my heart. You shape and mold it after Your liking. O fathomless love, I open the calyx of my heart to You, like a rosebud to the freshness of dew. To You alone, my Betrothed, is known the fragrance of the flower of my heart. Let the fragrance of my sacrifice be pleasing to You. O Immortal God, my everlasting delight, already here on earth You are my heaven. May every beat of my heart be a new hymn of praise to You, O Holy Trinity! Had I as many hearts as there are drops of water in the ocean or grains of sand in the whole world, I would offer them all to You, O my Love, O Treasure of my heart! Whomever I shall meet in my life, no matter who they may be, I want to draw them all to love You, O my Jesus, my Beauty, my Repose, my sole Master, Judge, Savior and Spouse, all in one; I know that one title will modify the other — I have entrusted everything to Your mercy.

1065 **(18)** + My Jesus, support me when difficult and stormy days come, days of testing, days of ordeal, when suffering and fatigue begin to oppress my body and my soul. Sustain me, Jesus, and give me strength to bear suffering. Set a guard upon my lips that they may address no word of

complaint to creatures. Your most merciful Heart is all my hope. I have nothing for my defense but only Your mercy; in it lies all my trust.

1066 March 27, 1937. Today, I returned from Pradnik, after nearly four months of treatment. For everything, I give great thanks to God. I have made use of every moment to glorify God. When I went into the chapel for a moment, I realized how much I would have to suffer and struggle, with regard to this whole matter. O Jesus, my strength, You alone can help me; grant me fortitude.

1067 March 28. Resurrection. During the Mass of Resurrection, I saw the Lord in beauty and splendor, and He said to me, **My daughter, peace be with you.** He blessed me and disappeared, and my soul was filled with gladness and joy beyond words. My heart was fortified for struggle and sufferings.

1068 Today, I had a conversation with Father [Andrasz] and he recommended great caution in the matter of these sudden appearances of the Lord Jesus. When he was speaking about divine mercy, some sort of strength and power entered my heart. My God, I want so much to express everything and am so very unable to do so. Father tells me that the Lord Jesus is very generous in communicating himself to souls and, on the other hand, He is, so to speak, stingy. "Although God's generosity is very great," said Father, "be careful anyway, because these sudden appearances arouse suspicion; although, personally, I do not see anything wrong here, or anything contrary to faith. Be a little more careful, and when Mother Superior comes, you can talk to her about these things."

1069 (19) March 29, 1937. During meditation today, I saw the Lord in great beauty, and He said to me, **Peace be to you, My daughter.** My whole soul trembled with love for Him and I said, "O Lord, although I love You with all my heart, please do not appear to me, because my spiritual director has told me that these sudden appearances of Yours arouse the suspicion that You could be an illusion. And although I love You more than my own life, and I know that You are my Lord and God, who are communing with me, I must above all be obedient to my confessor."

Jesus listened to my words with gravity and kindness and spoke these words to me: **Tell your confessor that I commune with your soul in**

such an intimate manner because you do not steal My gifts, and this is why I pour all these graces upon your soul, because I know that you will not hoard them for yourself. But as a sign that his prudence is agreeable to Me, you shall not see Me, and I will not appear to you in this way until you have given him an account of what I have just said.

1070 + April 2, 1937. In the morning, during Mass, I heard these words: **Tell the Superior that I want adoration to take place here for the intention of imploring mercy for the world.**

1071 O my Jesus, You alone know what my heart is going through. O my Strength, You can do all things, and though I expose myself to great sufferings, I shall always remain faithful to You because I am sustained by Your singular grace.

1072 + April 3, 1937. Today, the Lord said to me, **Tell the Reverend Professor** [probably Father Theodore¹⁸⁷] **that I desire that on the Feast of My Mercy he deliver a sermon about My fathomless mercy.** I fulfilled God's wish, but the priest did not want to acknowledge the Lord's message. When I left the confessional, I heard these words: **Do as I tell you and be at peace; this matter is between him and Me. You will not be held responsible for this.**

1073 (20) April 4, 1937. Low Sunday; that is, the Feast of Mercy. In the morning, after Holy Communion, my soul was immersed in the Godhead. I was united to the Three Divine Persons in such a way that when I was united to Jesus, I was simultaneously united to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. My soul was flooded with joy beyond understanding, and the Lord gave me to experience the whole ocean and abyss of His fathomless mercy. Oh, if only souls would want to understand how much God loves them! All comparisons, even if they were the most tender and the most vehement, are but a mere shadow when set against the reality.

When I was united to the Lord, I came to know how many souls are glorifying God's mercy.

1074 When I went for adoration, I heard these words: **My beloved daughter, write down these words, that today My Heart has rested in this**

convent [the Cracow house]. Tell the world about My mercy and My love.

The flames of mercy are burning me. I desire to pour them out upon human souls. Oh, what pain they cause Me when they do not want to accept them!

My daughter, do whatever is within your power to spread devotion to My mercy. I will make up for what you lack. Tell aching mankind to snuggle close to My merciful Heart, and I will fill it with peace.

Tell [all people], My daughter, that I am Love and Mercy itself. When a soul approaches Me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls.

1075 Souls who spread the honor of My mercy I shield through their entire lives as a tender mother her infant, and at the hour of death I will not be a Judge for them, but the Merciful Savior. (21) At that last hour, a soul has nothing with which to defend itself except My mercy. Happy is the soul that during its lifetime immersed itself in the Fountain of Mercy, because justice will have no hold on it.

1076 Write this: Everything that exists is enclosed in the bowels of My mercy, more deeply than an infant in its mother's womb. How painfully distrust of My goodness wounds Me! Sins of distrust wound Me most painfully.

1077 During Holy Mass, the Directress of Novices [Sister Callista¹⁸⁸] played a beautiful hymn about the mercy of God. I then asked the Lord to give her a deeper knowledge of the abyss of this inconceivable mercy.

1078 + When I was saying good night to the Lord before retiring, I heard the words, **Host, dear to My Heart, for your sake I bless the earth.**

1079 April 7, 1937. Today, when a certain person entered the chapel, I felt a terrible pain in my hands, my feet and my side, just as Jesus did during His Passion. This lasted only for a brief moment. But in this way I recognized a soul who was not in God's grace.

1080 On one occasion I saw the Holy Father reflecting about this matter [presumably the establishment of the Feast of The Divine Mercy].

1081 April 10, 1937. Today, Mother Superior gave me an article about The Divine Mercy to read, and with it there was also a reproduction of the image that had been painted. The article appeared in the *Vilnius Weekly*¹⁸⁹ and was sent to us in Cracow by Father Michael Sopocko, that zealous apostle of The Divine Mercy. In this article are included words that the Lord Jesus has spoken to me, some of them quoted verbatim.

1082 When I took the issue of the *Weekly* into my hands, an arrow of love pierced my soul. — **For the sake of your (22) ardent desires, I am hastening the Feast of Mercy.** My spirit burst into such a powerful flame of love that it seemed to me that I was totally dissolved in God.

1083 + That beautiful soul who is spreading this work of Divine Mercy throughout the world is, by his deep humility, very pleasing to God.

1084 Before every major grace, my soul undergoes a test of patience, for I feel the grace, but do not yet possess it. My spirit burns with impatience, but the hour has not yet come. These moments are so very extraordinary that it is difficult to describe them.

1085 April 13, 1937. Today I must stay in bed all day. I had a violent fit of coughing, which left me so weak that I have no strength to walk. My spirit is eager to do God's work, but physical strength has left me. I cannot penetrate Your actions at this moment, O Lord; therefore, I keep repeating with a loving act of the will: Do with me as You please.

1086 Although the temptations are strong, a whole wave of doubts beats against my soul, and discouragement stands by, ready to enter into the act. The Lord, however, strengthens my will, against which all the attempts of the enemy are shattered as if against a rock. I see how many actual graces God grants me; these support me ceaselessly. I am very weak, and I attribute everything solely to the grace of God.

1087 + When one day I resolved to practice a certain virtue, I lapsed into the vice opposed to that virtue ten times more frequently than on other days. In the evening, I was reflecting on why, today, I had lapsed so extraordinarily, and I heard the words: **You were counting too much on**

yourself and too little on Me. And I understood the cause of my lapses.

1088 **(23)** Sudden return of health.

After I had written a letter to Father Sopocko on Sunday, April 11, I suddenly became so very ill that I did not send that letter, but waited for a clear sign of God's will. However, my health got so bad that I had to go to bed. The coughing racked me so much that it seemed to me that, if this repeats a few more times, it will surely be the end of me.

1089 On April 14, I felt so bad that I barely managed to get up to assist at Holy Mass. I felt much worse than I did at the time they sent me for treatment. There was wheezing, and there were rattling noises in my lungs and strange pains. When I received Holy Communion, I don't know why, but it was as if something were urging me to this prayer, and I began to pray in this manner: "Jesus, may Your pure and healthy blood circulate in my ailing organism, and may Your pure and healthy body transform my weak body, and may a healthy and vigorous life throb within me, if it is truly Your holy will that I should set about the work in question; and this will be a clear sign of Your holy will for me."

As I was praying in this way, I suddenly felt as if something were jolting my whole organism and, in an instant, I felt completely well. My breath is clear, as if there had never been anything the matter with my lungs, and I feel no pain, and this is a sign for me that I should set about the work.

1090 And this happened on the last day of my novena to the Holy Spirit. After this return to health, I found myself united with the Lord Jesus in a purely spiritual way. Jesus gave me strong assurances; that is, He confirmed me in respect to His demands. I remained close to the Lord Jesus all that day and talked with Him about the details concerning that congregation.

(24) Jesus infused my soul with power and courage to act. Now I understand that if the Lord demands something of a soul, He gives it the means to carry it out, and through grace He makes it capable of doing this. So, even if the soul be utterly miserable, at the Lord's command it can undertake things beyond its expectation, because this is the sign by which it can be known that the Lord is with that soul: if God's power and

strength, which make the soul courageous and valiant, is manifest within it. As for myself, I am always at first a bit frightened at the Lord's greatness, but afterwards my soul is filled with profound peace which nothing can disturb, as well as an inner strength to do what the Lord is demanding at that particular moment....

1091 Then I heard these words: **Go tell the Superior that you are in good health.**

I neither know, nor ask how long I will remain in good health. I only know that I am enjoying good health at present. The future does not belong to me. I asked for this health as evidence of God's will and not in order to seek relief from my suffering.

1092 April 16, 1937. Today, as God's Majesty swept over me, my soul understood that the Lord, so very great though He is, delights in humble souls. The more a soul humbles itself, the greater the kindness with which the Lord approaches it. Uniting himself closely with it, He raises it to His very throne. Happy is the soul whom the Lord himself defends. I have come to know that only love is of any value; love is greatness; nothing, no works, can compare with a single act of pure love of God.

1093 + O Jesus, shield me with Your mercy and also judge me leniently, or else Your justice may rightly damn me.

1094 (25) April 17. Today, during a catechetical lecture [by Father Theodore¹⁹⁰], I was given a confirmation of what I had understood interiorly and lived by for quite some time; namely, that if a soul loves God sincerely and is intimately united with Him, then, even though such a soul may be living in the midst of difficult external circumstances, nothing can disturb its interior life; and in the midst of corruption, it can remain pure and unsullied; because the great love of God gives it strength for battle, and God also protects in a special way, even in a miraculous way, a soul that loves Him sincerely.

1095 When, one day, God gave me the inner knowledge that I had never lost my innocence, and that despite all dangers in which I had found myself, He Himself had been guarding me so that the virginity of my soul and heart would remain intact, I spent the day in fervent interior thanksgiving.

I thanked God that He had been pleased to protect me from evil, and also for this: That I had found favor in His eyes, that He Himself had given me assurance of this.

1096 And a few years later, He deigned to confirm me in this grace, and since that time I have not experienced the rebellion of the senses against the soul. I have written this down in greater detail elsewhere in my diary [cf. paragraph no. 40]. As often as I recall this inconceivable grace, a fresh flame of love and gratitude to God bursts forth from my heart; and this same love leads me to complete forgetfulness of self.

1097 Since that time, I have been living under the virginal cloak of the Mother of God. She has been guarding me and instructing me. I am quite at peace, close to Her Immaculate Heart. Because I am so weak and inexperienced, I nestle like a little child close to Her heart.

1098 Although God has confirmed me in this virtue, I am, however, constantly on the watch and fear even my own shadow, but this only because I have come to love God intensely.

1099 **(26)** This grace from God was given to me precisely because I was the weakest of all people; this is why the Almighty has surrounded me with His special mercy.

1100 April 24. I can sense every major grace in advance; a strange longing and desire for God comes over me, and then I wait for the grace. And the greater the grace, the more distinct is the presentiment, and the fiercer is my struggle with the adversary of my salvation.

My soul is sometimes in such a condition that I can only, describe it by means of a comparison: there are two great friends, and one of them is giving a great feast and has invited the other; both of them are looking forward to it; but the hour of the feast has been set. Well, the moments just before receiving the grace are so violent that it is difficult to describe them. They are marked by painful longing and the fire of love. I can feel the Lord is there, but I cannot be completely absorbed in Him, because the hour has been designated. Often, before such a moment of grace, I am utterly destitute in mind, will and heart. I am left all alone, and I wait for the One God. He Himself effects this in me before His coming.

April 23, 1937. I have begun a three-day retreat today.¹⁹¹

1101 In the evening, I heard these words in my soul: **My daughter, know that I shall speak to you in a special way through this priest** [Father Plaza¹⁹²] **so that you may not yield to doubt concerning My wishes.** Already in the first meditation my soul was struck by the following words of the priest: I must not oppose God's will and God's designs, whatever they might be; and as soon as I am convinced of the certitude and the authenticity of the will of God, I have the duty of carrying it out. No one can release me from this. Whatever (27) the will of God may be, once I have come to know it, I ought to carry it out. This is just a very short summary, but the whole meditation imprinted itself on my soul, and I have no doubts about anything. I know what God wants of me, and what I ought to do.

1102 There are, in my life, times and moments of spiritual insight; that is, divine illuminations, when the soul receives inward instruction about things it has not read in any book and has not been taught by any person. These are times of great inner knowledge which God himself imparts to the soul. These are great mysteries.... I often receive light and the knowledge of the interior life of God and of God's intimate disposition, and this fills me with unutterable trust and a joy that I cannot contain within myself; I desire to dissolve completely in Him....

1103 + The quintessence of love is sacrifice and suffering. Truth wears a crown of thorns. Prayer involves the intellect, the will, and the emotions.

1104 Today there was a beautiful teaching [by Father Plaza] on the goodness and mercy of God. During this conference my soul experienced the flames of God's love, and I understood that God's word is a living word.

1105 My particular examen is still the same; namely, union with the merciful Christ, and silence.

The flower which I lay at the feet of the Mother of God for May is my practice of silence.

1106 (28) + Virtue without prudence is not virtue at all. We should often pray to the Holy Spirit for this grace of prudence. Prudence consists in discretion, rational reflection and courageous resolution. The final

decision is always up to us. We must decide; we can and we ought to seek advice and light...

1107 Today during meditation, God gave me inner light and the understanding as to what sanctity is and of what it consists. Although I have heard these things many times in conferences, the soul understands them in a different way when it comes to know of them through the light of God which illumines it.

Neither graces, nor revelations, nor raptures, nor gifts granted to a soul make it perfect, but rather the intimate union of the soul with God. These gifts are merely ornaments of the soul, but constitute neither its essence nor its perfection. My sanctity and perfection consist in the close union of my will with the will of God. God never violates our free will. It is up to us whether we want to receive God's grace or not. It is up to us whether we will cooperate with it or waste it.

1108 In the last evening conference, which was a preparation for the renewal of vows, Father was speaking about the happiness that flows from the three vows, and about the reward that comes from observing them faithfully. Suddenly, my soul was thrown into great interior darkness. My soul was filled with bitterness instead of joy, and my heart was pierced with a sharp pain. I felt so miserable and unworthy of this grace and, conscious of my misery and unworthiness, I would not have dared to so much as approach the feet of the youngest postulant to kiss them. I saw the postulants, in spirit, beautiful and pleasing to the Lord; and myself, an abyss of misery. After **(29)** the conference, I flung myself at the feet of the hidden God, midst tears and pain. I threw myself into the sea of God's infinite mercy, and only there did I experience relief and feel that all of His omnipotent mercy was enveloping me.

1109 + 30. This is the day for the renewal of vows.

Immediately upon my awakening, God's presence enveloped me, and I felt I was a child of God. Divine love was poured into my soul, and God gave me to see how everything depended on His will. He spoke these words to me: **I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the Feast of My mercy.** Then He said to me, **My daughter, fear nothing. I am always**

with you, even if it seems to you that I am not. Your humility draws Me down from My lofty throne, and I unite Myself closely with you.

1110 29 [April 1937]. The Lord gave me to know about the disputes¹⁹³ that were going on in the Vatican concerning this Feast. The dignitary Pacelli did much work on this.

1111 Today is the renewal; that is, the profession of vows¹⁹⁴ in the course of a solemn celebration. As the sisters were making their vows, I heard angels singing in various tones, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” with chanting so delightful that no human tongue could ever match it.

1112 In the afternoon, I talked with my beloved Mother Directress of Novices, Mother Mary Joseph. We walked once around the garden, and I was able to have a talk with her, although it was a rather general one. She is ever the same beloved Mother Directress of Novices, although she is in fact no longer the directress, but a Superior, and it is already ten years since I pronounced my vows. She told me that it is impossible for a religious to live without the cross. However, she revealed to me a certain suffering which I had experienced in Warsaw, although I had never told her **(30)** about it. All the graces which I had received during the novitiate came back vividly before the eyes of my soul. Oh, how grateful I am to her! When my soul was plunged in darkness, and it seemed to me that I was damned, she wrenched me from that abyss by the power of obedience.

1113 My soul is often burdened with suffering, and there is no human being who can understand these torments.

1114 May 1, 1937. Today I felt the nearness of my Mother, my heavenly Mother, although before every Holy Communion I earnestly ask the Mother of God to help me prepare my soul for the coming of Her Son, and I clearly feel Her protection over me. I entreat Her to be so gracious as to enkindle in me the fire of God’s love, such as burned in Her own pure heart at the time of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

1115 May 4. Today I went to see Mother General [Michael] for a moment and asked her, “Dear Mother, have you had any inspiration regarding my leaving the convent?” Mother General answered, “Until the present,

Sister, I have always restrained you, but now I leave you complete freedom to choose to do as you wish; you can leave the Congregation or you can stay.” So I answered, “Very well.” I thought of writing immediately to the Holy Father to ask him to release me from my vows.¹⁹⁵ When I had left Mother General, darkness once again descended upon my soul, as it had in the past. It is strange that, each time I ask permission to leave the Congregation, this darkness invades my soul, and I feel as though I have been left completely on my own. While experiencing this torment of the spirit, **(31)** I decided to go immediately to Mother and tell her about my strange torment and struggle. Mother answered, “That leaving of yours is a temptation.” After talking to her for a while I felt some relief, but the darkness persisted. “This Divine Mercy is a beautiful thing, and it must be a great work of the Lord, since Satan opposes it so much and wants to destroy it.” Such were the words of our beloved Mother General.

1116 No one can understand or comprehend, nor can I myself describe, my torments. But there can be no sufferings greater than this. The sufferings of the martyrs are not greater because, at such times, death would be a relief for me. There is nothing to which I can compare these sufferings, this endless agony of the soul.

1117 May 5, [1937]. Today, I opened up my soul somewhat in confession, because it occurred to me that perhaps this is the real temptation: that at the time I ask to be allowed to leave the Congregation I experience such great suffering and darkness. To this the confessor replied that perhaps it was not the time appointed by God. “You must pray and wait patiently, but it is true that great sufferings are in store for you. You will have to bear many sufferings and overcome many difficulties; that much is certain. It would be better to wait and to pray much for deeper knowledge and for divine light. These are grave matters.”

1118 My God! In these difficult moments my spiritual director [Father Andrasz] is away, for he has gone to Rome. Jesus, since You have taken him away from me, guide me Yourself, **(32)** because You alone know how much I can bear. I believe firmly that God cannot give me more than I can bear. I trust in His mercy.

1119 In the moments when I am between heaven and earth, I keep silent,

because even if I did speak, who would understand what I say? Eternity will reveal many things about which I am now silent...

1120 When I went out into the garden, I saw how everything was breathing the joy of spring. The trees, adorned with flowers, gave off an intoxicating odor. Everything was throbbing with joy, and the birds were singing and chirping their adoration of God and said to me, "Rejoice and be happy, Sister Faustina"; but my soul remains in torment and darkness. My soul is so sensitive to the rustle of grace [that] it knows how to talk with all created things and with everything that surrounds me, and I know why God has adorned the earth in this way... But my heart cannot be joyful because my Beloved has hidden Himself from me, and I will not rest until I find Him... I do not know how to live without God, but I also feel that God, absolutely self-sufficient though He is, cannot be happy without me...

1121 May 6, [1937]. The Ascension of Our Lord.

Since early this morning, my soul has been touched by God. After Holy Communion, I communed for a while with the heavenly Father. My soul was drawn into the glowing center of love. I understood that no exterior works could stand comparison with pure love of God... I saw the joy of the Incarnate Word, and I was immersed in the Divine Trinity. When I came to myself, longing filled my soul, and I yearned to be united **(33)** with God. Such tremendous love for the heavenly Father enveloped me that I call this day an uninterrupted ecstasy of love. The whole universe seemed to me like a tiny drop in comparison with God. There is no greater happiness than when God gives me to know interiorly that every beat of my heart is pleasing to Him, and when He shows me that He loves me in a special way. This strong inner conviction, by which God assures me of His love for me and of how much my soul pleases Him, brings deep peace to my soul. Throughout this day, I was unable to take any food; I felt gratified to the full with love.

1122 God of great mercy, who deigned to send us Your only-begotten Son as the greatest proof of Your fathomless love and mercy, You do not reject sinners; but in Your boundless mercy You have opened for them also Your treasures, treasures from which they can draw abundantly, not only justification, but also all the sanctity that a soul can attain. Father of great

mercy, I desire that all hearts turn with confidence to Your infinite mercy. No one will be justified before You if he is not accompanied by Your unfathomable mercy. When You reveal the mystery of Your mercy to us, there will not be enough of eternity to properly thank You for it.

1123 Oh, how sweet it is to have in the depth of one's soul that which the Church tells us we must believe. When my soul is immersed in love, I solve the most intricate questions clearly and quickly. Only love is able to cross over precipices and mountain peaks. Love, once again, love.

1124 **(34)** + 12 [May 1937]. A strange darkness sometimes invades my intellect. I am submerged in nothingness against my will.

1125 May 20, 1937. When for a whole month I had been enjoying good health, it occurred to me that I did not know which was more pleasing to the Lord — my serving Him in illness or in the robust health for which I had asked Him — and I said to the Lord, “Jesus, do with me as You please,” and Jesus returned me to my previous condition.

1126 Oh, how sweet it is to live in a convent among sisters, but I must not forget that these angels are in human bodies.

1127 On one occasion, I saw Satan hurrying about and looking for someone among the sisters, but he could find no one. I felt an interior inspiration to command him in the Name of God to confess to me what he was looking for among the sisters. And he confessed, though unwillingly, “I am looking for idle souls [cf. Si. 33:28; Pr. 12:11].” When I commanded him again in the Name of God to tell me to which souls in religious life he has the easiest access, he said, again unwillingly, “To lazy and idle souls.” I took note of the fact that, at present, there were no such souls in this house. Let the toiling and tired souls rejoice.

1128 May 22, 1937. The heat is so intense today that it is difficult to bear. We are all thirsting for rain, and still it does not come. For several days the sky has been overcast, but there is no rain. When I looked at **(35)** the plants, thirsting for the rain I was moved with pity, and I decided to say the chaplet until the Lord would send us rain. Before supper, the sky covered over with clouds, and a heavy rain fell on the earth. I had been saying this prayer without interruption for three hours. And the Lord let

me know that everything can be obtained by means of this prayer.

[May] 23. The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity.

1129 During Holy Mass, I found myself suddenly united with the Most Holy Trinity. I recognized His majesty and greatness. I was united to the Three Persons. And once I was united to One of these Most Venerable Persons, I was, at the same time, united to the other Two Persons. The joy and happiness that my soul felt is beyond description. It grieves me that I am unable to put down in words that which has no words.

1130 I heard these words: **Tell the Superior General to count on you as the most faithful daughter in the Order.**¹⁹⁶

1131 After these words, I received an inner understanding of what all created things are before God. Immense and incomprehensible is His majesty. And that He condescends toward us, is the abyss of His mercy...

1132 All things will have an end in this vale of tears,
Tears will run dry and pain will cease.
Only one thing will remain —
Love for You, O Lord.

All things will have an end in this exile,
The ordeals and wilderness of the soul.
And though she live in perpetual agony,
If God is with her, nothing can shake her.

1133 (36) 27 [May 1937]. Corpus Christi.

During prayer, I heard these words: **My daughter, let your heart be filled with joy. I, the Lord, am with you. Fear nothing. You are in My heart.** At that moment, I knew the great majesty of God, and I understood that nothing could be compared with one single perception of God. Outward greatness dwindles like a speck of dust before one act of a deeper knowledge of God.

1134 The Lord has poured such a depth of peace into my soul that nothing will disturb it any more. Despite everything that goes on around me, I am not deprived of my peace for a moment. Even if the whole world were crumbling, it would not disturb the depth of the silence which is within

me and in which God rests. All events, all the various things which happen are under His foot.

1135 This deeper knowledge of God gives me full liberty and spiritual freedom, and nothing can disturb my close union with Him, not even the angelic powers. I feel that I am great when I am united to God. What happiness it is to have the consciousness of God in one's heart and to live in close intimacy with Him.

1136 When the procession from Borek¹⁹⁷ came to our house, carrying Him who was to be reposed in our chapel, I heard a voice coming from the Host: **Here is My repose.** During Benediction, Jesus gave me to know that soon a solemn moment would take place on this very spot. **I am pleased to rest in your heart and nothing will stop Me from granting you graces.** This greatness of God floods my soul, and I drown in Him, I lose myself in Him, I am melting away in Him...

1137 (37) May 30, [1937]. I am dying of yearning for God today. This longing fills all my soul. How very much I feel I am in exile. O Jesus, when will the longed-for moment come?

1138 May 31. My tormented soul finds aid nowhere but in You, O Living Host. I place all my trust in Your merciful heart. I am waiting patiently for Your word, Lord.

1139 Oh, what pain it causes my heart when I see a nun who has not the religious spirit! How can one be pleasing to God when one is inflated with pride and self-love under the pretense of striving for God's glory, while in fact one is seeking one's own glory? When I see such a thing, it gives me very great pain. How can such a soul be united closely with God? Union with the Lord is out of the question here.

1140 June 1, 1937. Today, the Corpus Christi procession¹⁹⁸ took place. At the first altar, a flame issued from the Host and pierced my heart, and I heard a voice, **Here is My resting place.** Ardor burst into flame in my heart. I felt that I am transformed completely into Him.

1141 In the evening, He gave me to understand how fleeting all earthly things are, and [how] everything that appears great disappears like smoke, and does not give the soul freedom, but weariness. Happy the soul that

understands these things and with only one foot touches the earth. My repose is to be united with You; everything else tires me. Oh, how much I feel I am in exile! I see that no one understands my interior life. You alone understand me, You who are hidden in my heart and yet are eternally alive.

1142 **(38)** June 4. Today is the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. During Holy Mass, I was given the knowledge of the Heart of Jesus and of the nature of the fire of love with which He burns for us and of how He is an Ocean of Mercy. Then I heard a voice: **Apostle of My mercy, proclaim to the whole world My unfathomable mercy. Do not be discouraged by the difficulties you encounter in proclaiming My mercy. These difficulties that affect you so painfully are needed for your sanctification and as evidence that this work is Mine. My daughter, be diligent in writing down every sentence I tell you concerning My mercy, because this is meant for a great number of souls who will profit from it.**

1143 + During Adoration, the Lord gave me a deeper knowledge of matters connected with this work.

1144 Today, I asked the Lord's pardon for all the offenses committed in our convents from which His divine Heart suffers.

1145 + June 6, [1937]. First Sunday of the month. Today I made my monthly retreat.

A light from the morning meditation: Whatever You do with me, Jesus, I will always love You, for I am Yours. Little matter whether You leave me here or put me somewhere else; I am always Yours.

It is with love that I abandon myself to Your most wise decrees, O God, and Your will, O Lord, is my daily nourishment. You, who know the beatings of my heart, know that it beats for You alone, my Jesus. Nothing can quench my longing for You. I am dying for You, Jesus. When will You take me into Your dwelling place [cf. Jn. 14:1-3]?

1146 **(39)** [Let] the greatest sinners place their trust in My mercy. They have the right before others to trust in the abyss of My mercy. My daughter, write about My mercy towards tormented souls. Souls that

make an appeal to My mercy delight Me. To such souls I grant even more graces than they ask. I cannot punish even the greatest sinner if he makes an appeal to My compassion, but on the contrary, I justify him in My unfathomable and inscrutable mercy. Write: before I come as a just Judge, I first open wide the door of My mercy. He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass through the door of My justice...

1147 When once I felt hurt because of a certain thing and complained to the Lord, Jesus answered, **My daughter, why do you attach such importance to the teaching and the talk of people? I Myself want to teach you; that is why I arrange things so that you cannot attend those conferences. In a single moment, I will bring you to know more than others will acquire through many years of toil.**

1148 June 20, [1937]. We resemble God most when we forgive our neighbors. God is Love, Goodness, and Mercy...

Every soul, and especially the soul of every religious, should reflect My mercy. My Heart overflows with compassion and mercy for all. The heart of My beloved must resemble Mine; from her heart must spring the fountain of My mercy for souls; otherwise I will not acknowledge her as Mine.

1149 **(40)** + On several occasions, I have learned how some religious defend their own glory under the pretext of being concerned for the glory of God, whereas it is not a question of the glory of God, but of glory of self. O Jesus, how painful this has been for me! What secrets the day of Your judgment will bring to light! How can one steal God's gifts?

1150 Today, I experienced a good deal of sorrow because of a certain person, a lay person, that is. On the basis of one true thing, she said many things which were fictitious. And because they were taken to be true and spread around the whole house, when the news reached my ears, my heart felt a twinge of pain. How can one abuse the goodness of others like that? But I resolved not to say a word in my defense and to show even greater kindness toward that person. I became aware, however, that I was not strong enough to bear this calmly, because the matter lingered on for weeks. When I saw the storm building up and the wind beginning to blow

sand straight into my eyes, I went before the Blessed Sacrament and said to the Lord, “Lord Jesus, I ask You to give me the strength of Your actual grace, because I feel that I will not manage to survive this struggle. Shield me with Your breast.”

Then I heard the words, **Do not fear; I am with you.** When I left the altar, an extraordinary peace and power filled my soul, and the storm that was raging broke against my soul as against a rock; and the foam of the storm fell on those who had raised it. Oh, how good is the Lord, who will reward each one according to his deed! Let every soul beg for the help of actual grace, as sometimes ordinary grace is not enough.

1151 (41) + When pain overwhelms my soul,
And the horizon darkens like night,
And the heart is torn with the torment of suffering,
Jesus Crucified, You are my strength.

When the soul, dimmed with pain,
Exerts itself in battle without respite,
And the heart is in agony and torment,
Jesus Crucified, You are the hope of my salvation.

And so the days pass,
As the soul bathes in a sea of bitterness,
And the heart dissolves in tears,
Jesus Crucified, You shine for me like the dawn.

And when the cup of bitterness brims over,
And all things conspire against her,
And the soul goes down to the Garden of Olives,
Jesus Crucified, in You is my defense.

When the soul, conscious of its innocence,
Accepts these dispensations from God,
The heart can then repay hurts with love.
Jesus Crucified, transform my weakness into omnipotence.

1152 It is no easy thing to bear sufferings joyfully, especially those which are unmerited. Fallen nature rebels, and although the intellect and will are above suffering, because they are able to do good to those who inflict

suffering on them, nevertheless the emotions raise a lot of noise and, like restless spirits, attack the intellect and will. But when they see they cannot do anything by themselves, they quiet down and submit to the intellect and will. Like some kind of hideousness, **(42)** they rush in and stir up a row, bent on making one obey them alone so long as they are not curbed by the intellect and will.

1153 June 23, [1937]. As I was praying before the Most Blessed Sacrament, my physical sufferings ceased suddenly, and I heard this voice in my soul: **You see, I can give you everything in one moment. I am not constrained by any law.**

June 24. After Holy Communion, I heard these words: **Know, My daughter, that in one moment I can give you everything that is needed for the fulfillment of this task.** After these words, an extraordinary light remained in my soul, and all God's demands seemed to me to be so simple that even a little child could carry them out.

1154 [June] 27. Today, I saw the convent of the new Congregation. It was a large and spacious building. I went from room to room, observing everything. I saw that God's Providence had provided for all that was necessary. The persons living in this convent were still wearing lay clothes, but a thoroughly religious spirit reigned there, and I was organizing everything just as the Lord wanted. All of a sudden, I heard a rebuke from one of our sisters, "Sister, how can you carry out such works?" I answered that it was not I, but the Lord working through me, and that I had the authorization for everything. During Mass, I received light and profound understanding concerning this whole work, and not a shadow of a doubt remained in my soul.

1155 **(43)** The Lord gave me knowledge of His will under three aspects, so to speak, but it all comes down to one.¹⁹⁹ The first is that souls separated from the world will burn as an offering before God's throne and beg for mercy for the whole world... and by their entreaties they will obtain blessings for priests, and through their prayers prepare the world for the final coming of Jesus.

1156 The second is prayer joined to the act of mercy. In particular, they will defend the souls of children against the spirit of evil. Prayer and merciful

deeds are all that will be required of these souls, and even the poorest persons can be admitted to their number. And in this egoistic world they will try to rouse up love, the mercy of Jesus.

1157 The third is prayer and deeds of mercy, without any obligation of taking vows. But by doing this, these persons will have a share in all the merits and privileges of the whole [congregation]. Everyone in the world can belong to this group.

1158 A member of this group ought to perform at least one act of mercy a day; at least one, but there can be many more, for such deeds can easily be carried out by anyone, even the very poorest. For there are three ways of performing an act of mercy: the merciful word, by forgiving and by comforting; secondly, if you can offer no word, then pray — that too is mercy; and thirdly, deeds of mercy. And when the Last Day comes, we shall be judged from this, and on this basis we shall receive the eternal verdict.

1159 God's floodgates have been opened for us. Let us want to take advantage of them before the day of God's justice arrives. And that will be a dreadful day!

1160 **(44)** When once I asked the Lord Jesus how He could tolerate so many sins and crimes and not punish them, the Lord answered me, **I have eternity for punishing [these], and so I am prolonging the time of mercy for the sake of [sinners]. But woe to them if they do not recognize this time of My visitation. My daughter, secretary of My mercy, your duty is not only to write about and proclaim My mercy, but also to beg for this grace for them, so that they too may glorify My mercy.**

1161 Today, my soul suffered such agony that I began to complain to the Lord Jesus, "Jesus, how can You leave me alone? I cannot take even one step forward by myself. You have taken my confessor away, and You Yourself are hiding from me. Surely, You know, Jesus, that of myself I know nothing but how to waste Your graces. Jesus, You must arrange things so that Father Andrasz will return." But the anguish persisted.

1162 It occurred to me to go to some priest and tell him of my anguish as

well as some various inspirations, that he might resolve them for me; and I shared this idea with Mother Superior [Irene]. Mother replied, “I understand, Sister, that you are going through a difficult time, but at present, I really do not know of any priest who would be suitable for you. At any rate, Father Andrasz will be returning soon. So, for now, go and tell everything to the Lord Jesus.”

1163 When I went to talk with the Lord for a while, I heard a voice in my soul: **My — I will not give you the grace to reveal yourself to someone else, and even if you did bare yourself, I will not give that priest the grace needed to understand you. At this time, it is My desire that you put up with yourself patiently. (45) My daughter, it is not My will that you should tell everybody about the gifts I have granted you. I have entrusted you to the care of the friend of My Heart, and under his direction your soul will bloom. I have given him light to recognize My life in your soul.**

1164 **My daughter, when I was before Herod, I obtained a grace for you; namely, that you would be able to rise above human scorn and follow faithfully in My footsteps. Be silent when they do not want to acknowledge your truth, because it is then that you speak more eloquently.**

1165 **Know this, My daughter: if you strive for perfection you will sanctify many souls; and if you do not strive for sanctity, by the same token, many souls will remain imperfect. Know that their perfection will depend on your perfection, and the greater part of the responsibility for these souls will fall on you.**

1166 Then He said to me, **Do not fear, My child; but remain faithful only to My grace...**

1167 Satan has admitted to me that I am the object of his hatred. He said that “a thousand souls do me less harm than you do when you speak of the great mercy of the Almighty One. The greatest sinners regain confidence and return to God, and I lose everything. But what is more, you persecute me personally with that unfathomable mercy of the Almighty One.” I took note of the great hatred Satan has for the Mercy of God. He does not want to acknowledge that God is good.

1168 **(46)** June 29, 1937. During breakfast today, Father Andrasz greeted the whole community by telephone. He is already back [from Rome], and this very afternoon he came to see us. The professed sisters, the novices, and both groups of students assembled in the quadrangle [the girls' playground in front of the building] and waited for our dear Father. The children welcomed him with songs and poems, and then we asked him to tell us about Rome and the many beautiful things he had seen there. He spoke for over two hours and, because of this, there was no time left to talk in private.

1169 Today, my soul entered into close union with the Lord. He made known to me how I should always abandon myself to His holy will: **In one moment, I can give you more than you are able to desire.**

1170 June 30, 1937. Today, the Lord said to me, **I have wanted to exalt this Congregation many times, but I am unable to do so because of its pride. Know, My daughter, that I do not grant My graces to proud souls, and I even take away from them the graces I have granted.**

1171 Today Sister Jolanta²⁰⁰ asked me to make an agreement with her: she will pray for me, and I am to pray for the girls in her class in Vilnius. As for me, I always pray for our work, but I have resolved to pray for the class in Vilnius for two months, and Sister Jolanta will say three Hail Marys to the Incarnate Word every day for the intention that I might profit from God's grace. Our friendship has deepened.

1172 **(47)** July 1, 1937. The month of July.

Today during the Angelus, the Lord gave me an understanding of God's incomprehensible love for people. He lifts us up to His very Godhead. His only motives are love and fathomless mercy. Though You make known the mystery to us through an angel, You Yourself carry it out.

1173 In spite of the profound peace my soul is enjoying, I am struggling continuously, and it is often a hard-fought battle for me to walk faithfully along my path; that is, the path which the Lord Jesus wants me to follow. And my path is to be faithful to the will of God in all things and at all times, especially by being faithful to inner inspirations in order to be a receptive instrument in God's hands for the carrying out of the work of

His fathomless mercy.

1174 **(48)** July 4, 1937. First Sunday of the month.

Monthly retreat.

This evening, I prepared with great care and prayed long to the Holy Spirit that He might deign to grant me His light and take me under His special guidance; [I prayed] also to Our Lady, to my Guardian Angel, and to our patron saints.^{[201](#)}

1175 Fruit of the meditation.

Whatever Jesus did, He did well. He went along, doing good. His manner was full of goodness and mercy. His steps were guided by compassion. Toward His enemies He showed goodness, kindness, and understanding, and to those in need help and consolation.

I have resolved to mirror faithfully these traits of Jesus in myself during this month, even if this costs me much.

1176 During Adoration, I heard a voice in my soul: **These efforts of yours, My daughter, are pleasing to Me; they are the delight of My Heart. I see every movement of your heart with which you worship Me.**

1177 Particular examen.

Continuation of the same: to unite myself with the merciful Christ. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, I will entreat the heavenly Father for the whole world. A point of the rule: strict observance of silence.

I must probe the depth of my being and thank God for everything, uniting myself with Jesus. With Him, in Him, and through Him, I give glory to God.

1178 **(49)** O Lord, my Love, I thank You for this day on which You have allowed me to draw a wealth of graces from the fountain of Your unfathomable mercy. O Jesus, not only today, but at every moment, I draw from Your unfathomable mercy everything that the soul and body could want.

1179 July 7, 1937. In times of doubt; that is, when the soul is weak, let it ask

Jesus Himself to act. Although it knows that it should act by the grace of God, nevertheless, at certain times, it is better for it to leave all action to God.

1180 June [July] 15, 1937. Once, I learned that I was to be transferred to another house. My knowledge of this was purely interior. At the same time, I heard a voice in my soul: **Do not be afraid, My daughter; it is My will that you should remain here. Human plans will be thwarted, since they must conform to My will.**

1181 When I was close to the Lord, He said to me, **Why are you afraid to begin the work which I have commanded you to carry out?** I answered, “Why do You leave me on my own at such times, Jesus, and why do I not feel Your presence?” **My daughter, even though you do not perceive Me in the most secret depths of your heart, you still cannot say that I am not there. I only remove from you the awareness of My presence, and that should not be an obstacle to the carrying out of My will. I do this to achieve My unfathomable ends, which you will know of later on.**

My daughter, know without doubt, and once and for all, that only mortal sin drives Me out of a soul, and nothing else.

1182 (50) + Today the Lord said to me, **My daughter, My pleasure and delight, nothing will stop Me from granting you graces. Your misery does not hinder My mercy. My daughter, write that the greater the misery of a soul, the greater its right to My mercy; [urge] all souls to trust in the unfathomable abyss of My mercy, because I want to save them all. On the cross, the fountain of My mercy was opened wide by the lance for all souls — no one have I excluded!**

1183 O Jesus, I want to live in the present moment, to live as if this were the last day of my life. I want to use every moment scrupulously for the greater glory of God, to use every circumstance for the benefit of my soul. I want to look upon everything, from the point of view that nothing happens without the will of God.

God of unfathomable mercy, embrace the whole world and pour Yourself out upon us through the merciful Heart of Jesus.

1184 On an earlier occasion.

In the evening, I saw the Lord Jesus upon the cross. From His hands, feet, and side the Most Sacred Blood was flowing. After some time, Jesus said to me, **All this is for the salvation of souls. Consider well, My daughter, what you are doing for their salvation.** I answered, “Jesus, when I look at Your suffering, I see that I am doing next to nothing for the salvation of souls.” And the Lord said to me, **Know, My daughter, that your silent day-to-day martyrdom in complete submission to My will ushers many souls into heaven. And when it seems to you that your suffering exceeds your strength, contemplate My wounds, (51) and you will rise above human scorn and judgment. Meditation on My Passion will help you rise above all things.** I understood many things I had been unable to comprehend before.

1185 July 9, 1937. This evening, one of the deceased sisters came and asked me for one day of fasting and to offer all my [spiritual] exercises on that day for her. I answered that I would.

1186 From early morning on the following day, I offered everything for her intention. During Holy Mass, I had a brief experience of her torment. I experienced such intense hunger for God that I seemed to be dying of the desire to become united with Him. This lasted only a short time, but I understood what the longing of the souls in purgatory was like.

1187 Immediately after Holy Mass, I asked Mother Superior’s permission to fast, but I did not receive it because of my illness. When I entered the chapel, I heard these words: “If you had fasted, Sister, I would not have gotten relief until the evening, but for the sake of your obedience, which prevented you from fasting, I obtained this relief at once. Obedience has great power.” After these words I heard: “May God reward you.”

1188 I often pray for Poland, but I see that God is very angry with it because of its ingratitude.²⁰² I exert all the strength of my soul to defend it. I constantly remind God of the promises of His mercy. When I see His anger, I throw myself trustingly into the abyss of His mercy, and I plunge all Poland in it, and then He cannot use His justice. My country, how much you cost me! There is no day in which I do not pray for you.

1189 (52) (A sentence from Saint Vincent de Paul: “The Lord always sets His hand to a task when He removes all human means and orders us to do a thing that exceeds our strength.”)

1190 + Jesus. — **From all My wounds, like from streams, mercy flows for souls, but the wound in My Heart is the fountain of unfathomable mercy. From this fountain spring all graces for souls. The flames of compassion burn Me. I desire greatly to pour them out upon souls. Speak to the whole world about My mercy.**

1191 As long as we live, the love of God grows in us. Until we die, we ought to strive for the love of God. I have learned and experienced that souls living in love are distinguished in this: that they are greatly enlightened concerning the things of God, both in their own souls and in the souls of others. And simple souls, without an education, are outstanding for their knowledge.

1192 At the fourteenth station. I get the strange feeling that Jesus is going into the ground.

When my soul is in anguish, I think only in this way: Jesus is good and full of mercy, and even if the ground were to give way under my feet, I would not cease to trust in Him.

1193 Today, I have heard these words: **My daughter, delight of My Heart, it is with pleasure that I look into your soul. I bestow many graces only because of you. I also withhold My punishments only because of you. You restrain Me, and I cannot vindicate the claims of My justice. You bind My hands with your love.**

1194 (53) July 13, 1937. Today, Jesus has given me light as to how I should behave toward one of the sisters, who had asked me about many spiritual matters concerning which she had doubts. But basically this was not the question; she only wanted to find out my opinion in these matters in order to have something to say about me to the other sisters. Oh, if at least she had repeated the same words that I had spoken to her without distortions and additions! Jesus put me on my guard in respect to her. I resolved to pray for her, because only prayer can enlighten that soul.

1195 O my Jesus, nothing can lower my ideals, that is, the love which I have

for You. Although the path is very thorny, I do not fear to go ahead. Even if a hailstorm of persecutions covers me; even if my friends forsake me, even if all things conspire against me, and the horizon grows dark; even if a raging storm breaks out, and I feel I am quite alone and must brave it all; still, fully at peace, I will trust in Your mercy, O my God, and my hope will not be disappointed.

1196 Today, when a certain sister who was on duty approached me in the refectory [the sisters' dining room, where assigned sisters serve at the time of common meals], I experienced severe suffering in the places of the Wounds. I was given to know the state of her soul. I prayed much for her.

1197 Sudden calming of a storm. There was a terrible storm last night. I bowed my face low to the ground and started to say the Litany of the Saints. Towards the end of the Litany, such drowsiness came over me that I could in no way finish the prayer. Then I got up and said to the Lord, "Jesus, **(54)** calm the storm, for Your child is unable to pray any longer, and I am heavy with sleep." After these words, I threw the window wide open, not even securing it with hooks. Sister N. [probably Sister Fabiola Pawluk] then said to me, "Sister, what are you doing! The wind will surely tear the window loose!" I told her to sleep in peace, and at once the storm completely subsided. The next day, the sisters talked about the sudden calming of the storm, not knowing what this meant. I said nothing, but I merely thought within myself: Jesus and little Faustina know what it means...

1198 The 20th [of July, 1937]. I learned today that I am to go to Rabka.²⁰³ I was not to leave until August 5, but I asked Mother Superior [Irene] to let me go at once. I have not seen Father Andrasz at all, and I asked her to let me leave as soon as possible. Mother Superior was a little surprised that I wanted to leave so soon, but I did not explain the reason for my wanting to do so. That will remain a secret forever. In these circumstances, I have made one resolution which I am going to keep.

1199 [July] 29. I am to leave for Rabka today. I went into the chapel and asked the Lord Jesus for a safe journey. But within my soul there was silence and darkness. I felt I was all alone and had no one [to turn to]. I asked Jesus to be with me. Then I felt a tiny ray of light in my soul as a

sign that Jesus was with me but, after this grace, the darkness and shadows in my soul increased. Then I said, “Your will be done, for everything is possible to You.” When I was on the train and gazed through the window at the beautiful countryside and the mountains, the torments of my soul grew even greater. As the sisters welcomed me and began to surround me with their warmth, my sufferings redoubled.

1200 I would have liked to hide and rest for a while in solitude, in a word, (55) to be alone. At such moments, no creature is capable of giving me comfort, and even if I had wanted to say something about myself, I would have experienced new anguish. Therefore, I have kept silent at such moments and submitted myself, in silence, to the will of God — and that has given me relief. I demand nothing from creatures and communicate with them only in so far as is necessary. I will not take them into my confidence unless this is for the greater glory of God. My communing is with the angels [cf. Mt. 18:10; Ex. 23:20].

1201 I feel so unwell here, however, that I am obliged to stay in bed. I feel strange sharp pains all through my chest; I cannot even move my hand. One night, I had to lie quite motionless, as it seemed to me that if I budged, everything in my lungs would tear. The night was endless. I united myself to Jesus Crucified, and I implored the heavenly Father on behalf of sinners. It is said that maladies of the lungs do not cause such sharp pains, but I suffer these sharp pains constantly. My health has deteriorated so much here that I must remain in bed, and Sister N. [probably Sister Helen²⁰⁴] says I will not improve, because the climate of Rabka is not good for every sick person.

1202 I could not even go to Holy Mass or receive Holy Communion today but, amidst the sufferings of body and soul, I kept on repeating, “May the Lord’s will be done. I know that Your bounty is without limit.” Then I heard an angel who sang out my whole life history and everything it comprised. I was surprised, but also strengthened.

1203 Saint Joseph urged me to have a constant devotion to him. He himself told me to recite three prayers [the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be] and the *Memorare*²⁰⁵ once every day. He looked at me with great kindness and gave me to know how much he is supporting this work [of mercy]. He has promised me this special help and protection. I recite the

requested prayers every day and feel his special protection.

(56) August 1, 1937. One-day retreat.

1204 A retreat of suffering. O Jesus, in these days of suffering, I am not capable of any kind of prayer. The oppression of my body and soul has increased. O my Jesus, You do see that Your child is on the decline. I am not forcing myself further, but simply submitting my will to the will of Jesus. O Jesus, You are always Jesus to me.

1205 When I went to confession, I did not even know how to confess. However, the priest [probably Father Casimir Ratkiewicz²⁰⁶] recognized the condition of my soul at once and said to me, “Despite everything, you are on the way to salvation; you are on the right path, but God may leave your soul in this darkness and obscurity until death, and the former light may never return. But in all things abandon yourself to the will of God.”

1206 Today, I started a novena to Our Lady of the Assumption for three intentions: first, that I may see the Reverend Dr. Sopocko; second, that God would hasten this work; and third, for the intention of my country.

1207 August 10. Today I am returning to Cracow, in the company of one of the sisters. My soul is shrouded in suffering. I am continually uniting myself to Him by an act of the will. He is my power and strength.

1208 May You be blessed, O God, for everything You send me. Nothing under the sun happens without Your will. I cannot penetrate Your secrets with regard to myself, but I press my lips to the chalice You offer me.

1209 (57) Jesus, I trust in You.

Novena to The Divine Mercy²⁰⁷

which Jesus instructed me to write down and make before the Feast of Mercy. It begins on Good Friday.

I desire that during these nine days you bring souls to the fountain of My mercy, that they may draw therefrom strength and refreshment and whatever grace they need in the hardships of life, and especially at the hour of death.

On each day you will bring to My Heart a different group of souls,

and you will immerse them in this ocean of My mercy, and I will bring all these souls into the house of My Father. You will do this in this life and in the next. I will deny nothing to any soul whom you will bring to the fount of My mercy. On each day you will beg My Father, on the strength of My bitter Passion, for graces for these souls.

I answered, "Jesus, I do not know how to make this novena or which souls to bring first into Your Most Compassionate Heart." Jesus replied that He would tell me which souls to bring each day into His Heart.

First Day

1210 Today, bring to Me all mankind, especially all sinners, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. In this way you will console Me in the bitter grief into which the loss of souls plunges Me.

1211 Most Merciful Jesus, whose very nature it is to have compassion on us and to forgive us, do not look upon our sins but upon our trust which (58) we place in Your infinite goodness. Receive us all into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart, and never let us escape from it. We beg this of You by Your love which unites You to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Oh omnipotence of Divine Mercy,
Salvation of sinful people,
You are a sea of mercy and compassion;
You aid those who entreat You with humility.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon all mankind and especially upon poor sinners, all enfolded in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, show us Your mercy, that we may praise the omnipotence of Your mercy forever and ever. Amen.

Second Day

1212 Today bring to me the souls of priests and religious, and immerse them in My unfathomable mercy. It was they who gave Me the strength to endure My bitter Passion. Through them, as through channels, My mercy flows out upon mankind.

1213 Most Merciful Jesus, from whom comes all that is good, increase Your grace in us, that we may perform worthy works of mercy, and that all

who see them may glorify the Father of Mercy who is in heaven.

The fountain of God's love
Dwells in pure hearts,
Bathed in the Sea of Mercy,
Radiant as stars, bright as the dawn.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze **(59)** upon the company [of chosen ones] in Your vineyard — upon the souls of priests and religious; and endow them with the strength of Your blessing. For the love of the Heart of Your Son in which they are enfolded, impart to them Your power and light, that they may be able to guide others in the way of salvation, and with one voice sing praise to Your boundless mercy for ages without end. Amen.

Third Day

1214 Today bring to Me all devout and faithful souls, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. These souls brought Me consolation on the Way of the Cross. They were that drop of consolation in the midst of an ocean of bitterness.

1215 Most Merciful Jesus, from the treasury of Your mercy You impart Your graces in great abundance to each and all. Receive us into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart and never let us escape from It. We beg this of You by that most wondrous love for the heavenly Father with which Your Heart burns so fiercely.

The miracles of mercy are impenetrable.
Neither the sinner nor just one will fathom them.
When You cast upon us an eye of pity,
You draw us all closer to Your love.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon faithful souls, as upon the inheritance of Your Son. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, grant them Your blessing and surround them with Your constant protection. Thus may they never fail in love or lose the treasure of the holy faith, but rather, with all the hosts of Angels and Saints, may they glorify your boundless mercy for endless ages. Amen.

(60) Fourth Day

1216 **Today bring to Me the pagans and those who do not yet know Me. I was thinking also of them during My bitter Passion, and their future zeal comforted My Heart. Immerse them in the ocean of My mercy.**

1217 Most compassionate Jesus, You are the Light of the whole world. Receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls of pagans who as yet do not know You. Let the rays of Your grace enlighten them that they, too, together with us, may extol Your wonderful mercy; and do not let them escape from the abode which is Your Most Compassionate Heart.

May the light of Your love
Enlighten the souls in darkness;
Grant that these souls will know You
And, together with us, praise Your mercy.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls of pagans and of those who as yet do not know You, but who are enclosed in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. Draw them to the light of the Gospel. These souls do not know what great happiness it is to love You. Grant that they, too, may extol the generosity of Your mercy for endless ages. Amen.

Fifth Day

1218 **Today bring to Me the souls of heretics and schismatics, and immerse them in the ocean of My mercy. During My bitter Passion they tore at My Body and Heart; that is, My Church. As they return to unity with the Church, My wounds heal, and in this way they alleviate My Passion.**

1219 Most Merciful Jesus, Goodness Itself, You do not refuse light to those who seek it of You. Receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls of heretics and schismatics. Draw them by Your light into the unity of the Church, and do not let them escape from the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart; but bring it about that they, too, come to extol the generosity of Your mercy.

(61) Even for those who have torn the garment of Your unity,

A fount of mercy flows from Your Heart.
The omnipotence of Your mercy, Oh God.
Can lead these souls also out of error.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls of heretics and schismatics, who have squandered Your blessings and misused Your graces by obstinately persisting in their errors. Do not look upon their errors, but upon the love of Your own Son and upon His bitter Passion, which He underwent for their sake, since they, too, are enclosed in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. Bring it about that they also may glorify Your great mercy for endless ages. Amen.

Sixth Day

1220 Today bring to me the meek and humble souls and the souls of little children, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls most closely resemble My Heart. They strengthened Me during My bitter agony. I saw them as earthly Angels, who would keep vigil at My altars. I pour out upon them whole torrents of grace. Only the humble soul is able to receive My grace. I favor humble souls with My confidence.

1221 (62) Most Merciful Jesus, You yourself have said, “Learn from Me for I am meek and humble of heart.” Receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart all meek and humble souls and the souls of little children. These souls send all heaven into ecstasy and they are the heavenly Father’s favorites. They are a sweet-smelling bouquet before the throne of God; God Himself takes delight in their fragrance. These souls have a permanent abode in Your Most Compassionate Heart, O Jesus, and they unceasingly sing out a hymn of love and mercy.

1222 A truly gentle and humble soul
Already here on earth the air of paradise breathes,
And in the fragrance of her humble heart
The Creator Himself delights.

1223 Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon meek and humble souls, and upon the souls of little children who are enfolded in the abode which is the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. These souls bear the closest resemblance to Your Son. Their fragrance rises from the earth and reaches Your very throne. Father of mercy and of all goodness, I beg You

by the love You bear these souls and by the delight You take in them: Bless the whole world, that all souls together may sing out the praises of Your mercy for endless ages. Amen.

Seventh Day

1224 Today bring to me the souls who especially venerate and glorify My mercy, and immerse them in My mercy. These souls sorrowed most over My Passion and entered most deeply into My Spirit. They are living images of My Compassionate Heart. These souls will shine with a special brightness in the next life. Not one of them will go into the fire of hell. I shall particularly defend each one of them at the hour of death.

1225 (63) Most Merciful Jesus, whose Heart is Love Itself, receive into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls of those who particularly extol and venerate the greatness of Your mercy. These souls are mighty with the very power of God Himself. In the midst of all afflictions and adversities they go forward, confident of Your mercy. These souls are united to Jesus and carry all mankind on their shoulders. These souls will not be judged severely, but Your mercy will embrace them as they depart from this life.

A soul who praises the goodness of her Lord
Is especially loved by Him.
She is always close to the living fountain
And draws graces from Mercy Divine.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls who glorify and venerate Your greatest attribute, that of Your fathomless mercy, and who are enclosed in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. These souls are a living Gospel; their hands are full of deeds of mercy, and their spirit, overflowing with joy, sings a canticle of mercy to You, O Most High! I beg You O God: Show them Your mercy according to the hope and trust they have placed in You. Let there be accomplished in them the promise of Jesus, who said to them, **I Myself will defend as My own glory, during their lifetime, and especially at the hour of their death, those souls who will venerate My fathomless mercy.**

Eighth Day

1226 **Today bring to Me the souls who are in the prison of Purgatory, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. Let the torrents of My Blood cool down their scorching flames. All these souls are greatly loved by Me. They are making retribution to My justice. It is in your power to bring them relief. Draw all the indulgences from the treasury (64) of My Church and offer them on their behalf. Oh, if you only knew the torments they suffer, you would continually offer for them the alms of the spirit and pay off their debt to My justice.**

1227 Most Merciful Jesus, You Yourself have said that You desire mercy; so I bring into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart the souls in Purgatory, souls who are very dear to You, and yet, who must make retribution to Your justice. May the streams of Blood and Water which gushed forth from Your Heart put out the flames of the purifying fire, that in that place, too, the power of Your mercy may be praised.

From that terrible heat of the cleansing fire
Rises a plaint to Your mercy,
And they receive comfort, refreshment, relief
In the stream of mingled Blood and Water.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the souls suffering in Purgatory, who are enfolded in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. I beg You, by the sorrowful Passion of Jesus Your Son, and by all the bitterness with which His most sacred Soul was flooded, manifest Your mercy to the souls who are under Your just scrutiny. Look upon them in no other way than through the Wounds of Jesus, Your dearly beloved Son; for we firmly believe that there is no limit to Your goodness and compassion.

Ninth Day

1228 **Today bring to Me souls who have become lukewarm, and immerse them in the abyss of My mercy. These souls wound My Heart most painfully. My soul suffered the most dreadful loathing in the Garden of Olives because of lukewarm souls. They were the reason I cried out: “Father, take this cup away from Me, if it be Your will.” For them, the last hope (65) of salvation is to flee to My mercy.**

1229 Most Compassionate Jesus, You are Compassion Itself. I bring

lukewarm souls into the abode of Your Most Compassionate Heart. In this fire of Your pure love let these tepid souls, who like corpses, filled You with such deep loathing, be once again set aflame. O Most Compassionate Jesus, exercise the omnipotence of Your mercy and draw them into the very ardor of Your love; and bestow upon them the gift of holy love, for nothing is beyond Your power.

Fire and ice cannot be joined;
Either the fire dies, or the ice melts.
But by Your mercy, O God,
You can make up for all that is lacking.

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon lukewarm souls, who are nonetheless enfolded in the Most Compassionate Heart of Jesus. Father of Mercy, I beg You by the bitter Passion of Your Son and by His three-hour agony on the Cross: Let them, too, glorify the abyss of Your mercy...

1230 **(66)** O day of eternity, O day so long desired,
With thirst and longing, my eyes search you out.
Soon love will tear the veil asunder,
And you will be my salvation.

O day most beautiful, moment incomparable,
When for the first time I shall see my God,
The Bridegroom of my soul and Lord of lords,
And fear will not restrain my soul.

O day most solemn, O day of brightness,
When the soul will know God in His omnipotence
And drown totally in His love,
Knowing the miseries of exile are o'er.

O happy day, O blessed day,
When my heart will burn for You with fire eternal,
For even now I feel Your presence, though through the veil.
Through life and death, O Jesus, You are my rapture and delight.

O day, of which I dreamed through all my life,
Waiting long for You, O God,

For it is You alone whom I desire.
You are the one and only of my heart; all else is naught.

O day of delight, day of eternal bliss,
God of great majesty, my beloved Spouse,
You know that nothing will satisfy a virgin heart.
On Your tender Heart I rest my brow.

[End of Notebook Three]

*Notebook Four of the Diary of Sister
Faustina*

NOTEBOOK IV

(1)+

J. M. J.

1231 Today Jesus came to live in my heart,
He descended from His throne on high,
The great Lord, the Creator of all things;
And He came to me in the form of bread.

O Eternal God, in my bosom enclosed,
Possessing You, I possess all Heaven,
And with the Angels I sing to You: Holy,
I live for Your glory alone.

Not with a Seraph, do You unite Yourself, O God,
But with a wretched man
Who can do nothing without You;
But to him You are ever merciful.

My heart is Your abode,
O King of Eternal Glory;
Rule in my heart and be Lord,
As in a palace of splendor untold.

O great, incomprehensible God,
Who have deigned to abase Yourself so,
Humbly I adore You
And beg You in Your goodness to save me.

(2)+

J. M. J.

1232 O sweet Mother of God,
I model my life on You;
You are for me the bright dawn;
In You I lose myself, enraptured.

O Mother, Immaculate Virgin,
In You the divine ray is reflected,
Midst storms, 'tis You who teach me to love the Lord,
O my shield and defense from the foe.

Cracow, August 10, 1937.

1233 Sr. Maria Faustina
of the Blessed Sacrament

O Sacred Host, fountain of divine sweetness,
You give strength to my soul;
O You are the Omnipotent One, who took flesh of the Virgin,
You come to my heart, in secret,
Beyond reach of the groping senses.

(3)+
J. M. J.

Cracow, August 10, 1937
Notebook Four

1234 All for You, Jesus. I desire to adore Your mercy with every beat of my heart and, to the extent that I am able, to encourage souls to trust in that mercy, as You Yourself have commanded me, O Lord.

1235 In my heart, in my soul, there is a dark night. My spirit has come up against an impenetrable wall that hides God from me. But this darkness is not of my doing. Strange indeed is this torture of which I fear to write in full. But even in this state, I am trying to be faithful to You, O my Jesus. Always and in all things, my heart beats for You alone.

1236 **(4)** August 10, 1937. I came back today from Rabka to Cracow. I feel very ill. Only Jesus knows how much I am suffering. During these days, I have very much resembled Jesus Crucified. I have armed myself with patience in order to explain to each sister why I was not able to stay there; that is, because my health had become worse, even though I knew very well that certain sisters would inquire, not out of sympathy for my sufferings, but in order to add to them.

1237 O Jesus, what darkness is enveloping me and what nothingness is penetrating me. But, my Jesus, do not leave me alone; grant me the grace of faithfulness. Although I cannot penetrate the mystery of God's visitation, it is in my power to say: Your will be done.

1238 August 12. On passing through Cracow, Rev. Father Sopocko paid me a

short visit today. I had wanted to see him, and God fulfilled my desire.
(5) This priest is a great soul, entirely filled with God. My joy was very great, and I thanked God for this great grace, because it was for the greater glory of God that I wanted to see him.

1239 O living Host, O hidden Jesus. You see the condition of my soul. Of myself, I am unable to utter Your Holy Name. I cannot bring forth from my heart the fire of love but, kneeling at Your feet, I cast upon the Tabernacle the gaze of my soul, a gaze of faithfulness. As for You, You are ever the same, while within my soul a change takes place. I trust that the time will come when You will unveil Your countenance, and Your child will again see Your sweet face. I am astonished, Jesus, that You can hide Yourself from me for so long and that You can restrain the enormous love You have for me. In the dwelling of my heart, I am listening and waiting for Your coming, O only Treasure of my heart!

1240 (6) The Lord Jesus greatly protects His representatives on earth. How closely He is united with them; and He orders me to give priority to their opinion over His. I have come to know the great intimacy which exists between Jesus and the priest. Jesus defends whatever the priest says, and often complies with his wishes, and sometimes makes His own relationship with a soul depend on the priest's advice. O Jesus, through a special grace, I have come to know very clearly to what extent You have shared Your power and mystery with them, more so than with the Angels. I rejoice in this, for it is all for my good.

1241 + O my Jesus, when someone is unkind and unpleasant toward us, it is difficult enough to bear this kind of suffering. But this is very little in comparison to a suffering which I cannot bear; namely, that which I experience when someone exhibits kindness towards me and then lays snares at my feet at every step (7) I take. What great will power is necessary to love such a soul for God's sake. Many a time one has to be heroic in loving such a soul as God demands. If contact with that person were infrequent, it would be easier to endure, but when one lives in close contact with the person and experiences this at each step, this demands a very great effort.

1242 My Jesus, penetrate me through and through so that I might be able to reflect You in my whole life. Divinize me so that my deeds may have

supernatural value. Grant that I may have love, compassion and mercy for every soul without exception. O my Jesus, each of Your saints reflects one of Your virtues; I desire to reflect Your compassionate heart, full of mercy; I want to glorify it. Let Your mercy, O Jesus, be **(8)** impressed upon my heart and soul like a seal, and this will be my badge in this and the future life. Glorifying Your mercy is the exclusive task of my life.

August 15, 1937. Father Andrasz's instructions.

1243 "These times of dryness and stark awareness of one's wretchedness, which God has permitted, allow the soul to know how little it can do by itself. They will teach you how much you should appreciate God's graces. Secondly, faithfulness in all exercises and duties, faithfulness in everything, just as in times of joy. Thirdly, as regards the matters in question, be absolutely obedient to the Archbishop [Jalbrzykowski] although, from time to time, the matter can be brought to his attention, but peacefully. **(9)** Sometimes, a little bitter truth is necessary."

At the end of the conversation, I asked the priest to allow me to commune with Jesus as I had done formerly. He answered, "I cannot give orders to the Lord Jesus, but if He Himself draws you to Himself you may follow the attraction. However, always remember to show Him great reverence, for the Lord is great indeed. If you are truly seeking God's will in all this and desire to fulfill it, you can be at peace; the Lord will not allow any sort of error. As to the mortifications and sufferings, you will give me an account next time of how you carry them out. Place yourself in the hands of the Most Holy Mother."

1244 August 15, 1937. During meditation, God's presence pervaded me keenly, and I was aware of the Virgin Mary's joy at the moment of Her Assumption. Towards the end of the ceremony **(10)** carried out in honor of the Mother of God, I saw the Virgin Mary, and She said to me, *Oh, how very pleased I am with the homage of your love!* And at that moment She covered all the sisters of our Congregation with Her mantle. With Her right hand, She clasped Mother General Michael to herself, and with Her left hand She did so to me, while all the sisters were at Her feet, covered with Her mantle. Then the Mother of God said, *Everyone who perseveres zealously till death in My Congregation will be spared the fire of purgatory, and I desire that each one distinguish herself by the*

following virtues: humility and meekness; chastity and love of God and neighbor; compassion and mercy. After these words, the whole Congregation disappeared from my sight, and I remained alone with the Most Holy Mother who instructed me about the will of God and how to (11) apply it to my life, submitting completely to His most holy decrees. It is impossible for one to please God without obeying His holy will. My daughter, I strongly recommend that you faithfully fulfill all God's wishes, for that is most pleasing in His holy eyes. I very much desire that you distinguish yourself in this faithfulness in accomplishing God's will. Put the will of God before all sacrifices and holocausts. While the heavenly Mother was talking to me, a deep understanding of this will of God was entering my soul.

1245 My Jesus, delight of my heart, when my soul is filled with Your divinity, I accept sweetness and bitterness with the same equanimity. One and the other will pass away. All that I keep in my soul is the love of God. For this I strive; all else is secondary.

1246 (12) 16 [August 1937]. After Holy Communion, I saw the Lord Jesus in all His majesty, and He said to me, **My daughter, during the weeks when you neither saw Me nor felt My presence, I was more profoundly united to you than at times** [when you experienced] **ecstasy. And the faithfulness and fragrance of your prayer have reached Me.** After these words, my soul became flooded with God's consolation. I did not see Jesus, and there was only one word I could utter and that was: "Jesus." And after pronouncing that Name, my soul was again filled with light and deeper recollection, which lasted uninterruptedly for three days. However, outwardly I could still carry out my usual duties.

My whole being was stirred to its most secret depths. God's greatness does not frighten me, but makes me happy. By giving Him glory, I myself am lifted up. On seeing His happiness, I myself am made happy, because (13) all that is in Him flows back upon me.

1247 I came to know of the condition of a certain soul and of what in that soul is displeasing to God. I learn it in the following way: I immediately feel pain in my hands, my feet and my side, in those places where the hands, feet and side of the Savior were pierced. At that same time, I

receive knowledge of the soul's condition and of the nature of the sin committed.

1248 I experience a desire to make reparation to the Lord Jesus in a way which corresponds [to the offense]. Today I wore a chain belt for seven hours in order to obtain the grace of repentance for that soul. In the seventh hour I felt relief as the soul experienced interiorly the remission of its sin, although it had not yet gone to confession. For sins of the flesh, I mortify the body and fast to the degree that I am permitted. For sins of pride, **(14)** I pray with my forehead touching the floor. For sins of hatred, I pray and do some good deed for a person whom I find difficult. And thus I make amends according to the nature of the sin of which I am aware.

1249 19 [August 1937]. Today during adoration, the Lord gave me to know how much He desires a soul to distinguish itself by deeds of love. And in spirit I saw how many souls are calling out to us, "Give us God." And the blood of the Apostles boiled up within me. I will not be stingy with it; I will shed it all to the last drop for immortal souls. Although perhaps God will not demand that in the physical sense, in spirit it is possible and no less meritorious.

1250 Today I realized that I was not to ask for a certain permission, but that I was to respond to this matter as the Mother of God would have me do. For the present, no explanations are **(15)** necessary; peace has returned to me. I received this inspiration just as I was on my way to make my examination of conscience, and I was very worried because I did not know how to go about it. Divine light can do more in one moment than I, fatiguing myself for several days.

1251 August 22. This morning Saint Barbara, Virgin, visited me and recommended that I offer Holy Communion for nine days on behalf of my country and thus appease God's anger. This virgin was wearing a crown made of stars and was holding a sword in her hand. The brilliance of the crown was the same as that of the sword. With her white dress and her flowing hair, she was so beautiful that if I had not already known the Virgin Mary I would have thought that it was She. Now I understand that each virgin has a special beauty all her own; a distinct beauty radiates from each of them.

1252 **(16)** + August 25, 1937. Today Reverend Father Sopocko arrived and will stay with us until the 30th. I was extremely glad, because only God knows how ardently I wished to see him for the sake of the work God is doing through him, and this, even though the visit had some unpleasant aspects to it as well.

1253 + While he was celebrating Mass, I saw during the elevation the Crucified Lord Jesus, who was disengaging His right arm from the cross, and the light which was coming from the Wound was touching his arm. This happened in the course of three Masses, and I understood that God would give him strength to carry out this work despite difficulties and opposition. This soul, who is pleasing to God, is being crucified by numerous sufferings, but I am not at all surprised, for this is how God treats those He especially loves.

1254 **(17)** + Today, the 29th, I received permission²⁰⁸ to have a longer conversation with Rev. Dr. Sopocko. I learned that, although there are difficulties, the work is moving ahead, and that the Feast of Mercy is already far advanced. It will not be long now before it becomes a reality, but much prayer is still needed to bring an end to certain difficulties.

1255 “As concerns yourself, Sister, it is good that you are remaining in a state of holy indifference in everything that pertains to the will of God, and that you are better maintaining a state of equilibrium. Please do your best to keep this equanimity. Now, as regards all these matters, you are to depend exclusively on Father Andrasz; I am in complete agreement with him. Do nothing on your own, Sister, but in all matters take counsel from your spiritual director. I beg you to keep your levelheadedness and as great a calm as possible. —One more thing — I am having printed **(18)** the chaplet which is to be on the back of the image, as well as the invocations that resemble a litany; these too will be placed on the back. Another large image has also been printed, and with it a few pages which contain the Novena to The Divine Mercy.²⁰⁹ Pray, Sister, that this be approved.”

1256 [August] 30. Reverend Father Sopocko left this morning. When I was steeped in a prayer of thanksgiving for the great grace that I had received from God; namely, that of seeing Father, I became united in a special way with the Lord who said to me, **He is a priest after My own Heart;**

his efforts are pleasing to Me. You see, My daughter, that My will must be done and that which I had promised you, I shall do. Through him I spread comfort to suffering and careworn souls. Through him it pleased Me to proclaim the worship of My mercy. (19) And through this work of mercy more souls will come close to Me than otherwise would have, even if he had kept giving absolution day and night for the rest of his life, because by so doing, he would have labored only for as long as he lived; whereas, thanks to this work of mercy, he will be laboring till the end of the world.

1257 I had undertaken to make a novena for the intention of seeing him, but I did not even finish it before God granted me that grace.

1258 O my Jesus, how poorly I took advantage of this grace, but that did not depend on me, though from another point of view, it did so very much.

1259 + During this conversation, I came to know his anguished soul. This crucified soul resembles the Savior. Where he expects, with good reason, to find consolation, he finds the cross. He lives among many friends, but has no one but Jesus. This is how God strips the soul He especially loves.

1260 (20) Today I heard these words: **My daughter, be always like a little child towards those who represent Me, otherwise you will not benefit from the graces I bestow on you through them.**

1261 September 1, 1937. I saw the Lord Jesus, like a king in great majesty, looking down upon our earth with great severity; but because of His Mother's intercession He prolonged the time of His mercy.

1262 September 3. First Friday of the month. During Holy Mass, I became united with God. Jesus gave me to know that even the smallest thing does not happen on earth without His will. After having seen this, my soul entered into an unusual repose; I found myself completely at peace as to the work in its full extent. God can deal with me as He pleases, and I will bless Him for everything.

1263 (21) Up to now, I have been wondering, with some fear, where these inspirations would lead me. My fear increased when the Lord made known to me that I was to leave this Congregation. This is the third year passing by since that time, and my soul has felt, in turns, enthusiasm and

an urge to act — and then I have a lot of courage and strength — and then again, when the decisive moment to undertake the work draws near, I feel deserted by God, and because of this an extraordinary fear pervades my soul, and I see that it is not the hour intended by God to initiate the work. These are sufferings about which I don't even know how to write. God alone knows what I put up with, day and night. It seems to me that the worst torments of the martyrs would be easier for me to bear than what I am going through, though without the shedding of a drop of blood. But all this is for souls, for souls, Lord....

1264 **(22)** Act of total abandonment to the will of God, which is for me, love and mercy itself.

Act of Oblation

Jesus-Host, whom I have this very moment received into my heart, through this union with You I offer myself to the heavenly Father as a sacrificial host, abandoning myself totally and completely to the most merciful and holy will of my God. From today onward, Your will, Lord, is my food. Take my whole being; dispose of me as You please. Whatever Your fatherly hand gives me, I will accept with submission, peace and joy. I fear nothing, no matter in what direction You lead me; helped by Your grace I will carry out everything You demand of me. I no longer fear any of Your inspirations nor (23) do I probe anxiously to see where they will lead me. Lead me, O God, along whatever roads You please; I have placed all my trust in Your will which is, for me, love and mercy itself.

Bid me to stay in this convent, I will stay; bid me to undertake the work, I will undertake it; leave me in uncertainty about the work until I die, be blessed; give me death when, humanly speaking, my life seems particularly necessary, be blessed. Should You take me in my youth, be blessed; should You let me live to a ripe old age, be blessed. Should You give me health and strength, be blessed; should You confine me to a bed of pain for my whole life, be blessed. Should you give only failures and disappointments in life, be blessed. Should You allow my purest intentions to be condemned, be blessed. Should You enlighten my mind, be blessed. Should You leave me in darkness and all kinds of **(24)** torments, be blessed.

From this moment on, I live in the deepest peace, because the Lord Himself is carrying me in the hollow of His hand. He, Lord of unfathomable mercy, knows that I desire Him alone in all things, always and everywhere.

1265 Prayer. O Jesus, stretched out upon the cross, I implore You, give me the grace of doing faithfully the most holy will of Your Father, in all things, always and everywhere. And when this will of God will seem to me very harsh and difficult to fulfill, it is then I beg You, Jesus, may power and strength flow upon me from Your wounds, and may my lips keep repeating, "Your will be done, O Lord." O Savior of the world, Lover of man's salvation, who in such terrible torment and pain forget Yourself to think only of the salvation of souls, O most compassionate Jesus, grant me the grace to forget myself that I may live totally for souls, helping You in the work of salvation, according to the most holy will of Your Father....

1266 (25) August 5, [1937].²¹⁰ The Lord let me know how much our dear Mother Superior [Irene] is defending me against... not only by prayer but also by deed. Thank You, Jesus, for this grace. It will not go unrequited in my heart; when I am with Jesus, I do not forget about her.

1267 September 6, 1937. Today, I begin a new assignment. I go from the garden to the desert of the gate.²¹¹ I went in to talk to the Lord for a while. I asked Him for a blessing and for graces to faithfully carry out the duties entrusted to me. I heard these words: My daughter, I am always with you. I have given you the opportunity to practice deeds of mercy which you will perform according to obedience. You will give Me much pleasure if, each evening, you will speak to Me especially about this task. I felt that Jesus had given me a new grace in relation to my new duties; but, despite this, I have locked myself deeper in His Heart.

1268 (26) Today I felt more ill, but Jesus has given me many more opportunities on this day to practice virtue. It so happened that I was busier than usual, and the sister in charge of the kitchen made it clear to me how irritated she was that I had come late for dinner, although it was quite impossible for me to have come sooner. At any rate, I felt so unwell that I had to ask Mother Superior to allow me to lie down. I went to ask Sister N. to take my place, and again I got a scolding: "What is this,

Sister, you're so exhausted that you're going back to bed again! Confound you with all this lying in bed!" I put up with all that, but that wasn't the end. I still had to ask the sister who was in charge of the sick to bring me my meal. When I told her this, she burst out of the chapel into the corridor after me to give me a piece of her mind: "Why on earth are you going to bed, Sister, etc...." I asked her not to bother bringing me anything. (27) I am writing all this very briefly because it is not my intention to write about such things, and I am doing so merely to dissuade souls from treating others in this way, for this is displeasing to the Lord. In a suffering soul we should see Jesus Crucified, and not a loafer or burden on the community. A soul who suffers with submission to the will of God draws down more blessings on the whole convent than all the working sisters. Poor indeed is a convent where there are no sick sisters. God often grants many and great graces out of regard for the souls who are suffering, and He withholds many punishments solely because of the suffering souls.

1269 O my Jesus, when shall we look upon souls with higher motives in mind? When will our judgments be true? You give us occasions to practice deeds of mercy, and instead we use the occasions to pass judgment. In order to know whether the love of God flourishes in a convent, one must ask how they treat the sick, the disabled, and the infirm who are there.

1270 (28) September 10, [1937]. I learned in the course of meditation that the purer the soul, the greater her communion with God on the spiritual level. She pays little heed to the senses and their protests. God is a Spirit, and so I love Him in spirit and in truth.

1271 When I heard how dangerous it was to be at the gate these days because of revolutionary disturbances and how many evil people have a hatred for convents, I went in and had a talk with the Lord and asked Him to so arrange it that no evil person would dare come to the gate. Then I heard these words: **My daughter, the moment you went to the gate I set a Cherub over it to guard it. Be at peace.** After returning from my conversation with the Lord, I saw a little white cloud and, in it, a Cherub with his hands joined. His gaze was like lightning, and I understood how the fire of God's love burns in that look....

1272 **(29)** September 14, 1937. Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Today I saw what great opposition this priest [Father Sopocko] is experiencing in regard to this whole matter. Even devout souls who are zealous for God's glory are opposing him. That he is not discouraged by all this is due to a special grace of God.

1273 Jesus: **My daughter, do you think you have written enough about My mercy? What you have written is but a drop compared to the ocean. I am Love and Mercy Itself. There is no misery that could be a match for My mercy, neither will misery exhaust it, because as it is being granted — it increases. The soul that trusts in My mercy is most fortunate, because I Myself take care of it.**

1274 I experience great torments of soul when I see God offended. Today I recognized that mortal sins were being committed not far from our door. It was evening. I prayed earnestly in the chapel, **(30)** and then I went to scourge myself. When I knelt down to pray, however, the Lord allowed me to experience how a soul rejected by God suffers. It seems to me that my heart was torn to pieces, and at the same time I understood how much such a soul wounds the most merciful Heart of Jesus. The poor creature does not want to accept God's mercy. The more God has pursued a soul with His mercy, the more just will He be towards it.

1275 **My Secretary, write that I am more generous toward sinners than toward the just. It was for their sake that I came down from heaven; it was for their sake that My Blood was spilled. Let them not fear to approach Me; they are most in need of My mercy.**

1276 September 16, 1937. I wanted very much to make a Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament today, but God's will was otherwise. At eight o'clock I was seized with such violent pains that **(31)** I had to go to bed at once. I was convulsed with pain for three hours; that is, until eleven o'clock at night. No medicine had any effect on me, and whatever I swallowed I threw up. At times, the pains caused me to lose consciousness. Jesus had me realize that in this way I took part in His Agony in the Garden, and that He Himself allowed these sufferings in order to offer reparation to God for the souls murdered in the wombs of wicked mothers. I have gone through these sufferings three times now. They always start at eight o'clock in the evening and last until eleven. No

medicine can lessen these sufferings. When eleven o'clock comes, they cease by themselves, and I fall asleep at that moment. The following day, I feel very weak.

This happened to me for the first time when I was at the sanatorium. The doctors couldn't get to the bottom of it, and no injection or medicine helped me at all **(32)** nor did I myself have any idea of what the sufferings were about. I told the doctor that never before in my life had I experienced such sufferings, and he declared he did not know what sort of pains they are. But now I understand the nature of these pains, because the Lord Himself has made this known to me.... Yet when I think that I may perhaps suffer in this way again, I tremble. But I don't know whether I'll ever again suffer in this way; I leave that to God. What it pleases God to send, I will accept with submission and love. If only I could save even one soul from murder by means of these sufferings!

1277 On the day after these sufferings, I can sense the condition of souls and their disposition towards God; I am pervaded with true knowledge.

1278 I receive Holy Communion in the manner of the angels, so to speak. My soul is filled with God's light and nourishes itself from Him. **(33)** My feelings are as if dead. This is a purely spiritual union with God; it is a great predominance of spirit over nature.

1279 The Lord gave me knowledge of the graces which He has been constantly lavishing on me. This light pierced me through and through, and I came to understand the inconceivable favors that God has been bestowing on me. I stayed in my cell for a long act of thanksgiving, lying face down on the ground and shedding tears of gratitude. I could not rise from the ground because, whenever I tried to do so, God's light gave me new knowledge of His grace. It was only at the third attempt that I was able to get up. As His child, I felt that everything the heavenly Father possessed was equally mine. He Himself lifted me from the ground up to His Heart. I felt that everything that existed was exclusively mine, but I had no desire for it all, because God alone is enough for me.

1280 **(34)** Today I learned with what aversion the Lord comes to a certain soul in Holy Communion. He goes to that heart as to a dark prison, to undergo torture and affliction. I kept begging His pardon and offering

atonement for the offense.

1281 The Lord made known to me that I would see my brother [Stanley²¹²], but I could not understand how this would happen or why he should come to visit me. I knew that God had given him the grace of a religious vocation, but why should he be coming to visit me? However, I put aside these thoughts and believed that if the Lord had given me to know he would come, that was enough for me. I fixed my thoughts on God, putting aside every preoccupation with creatures and entrusting everything to the Lord.

1282 + When the same poor people come to the gate a second time, I treat them with greater gentleness, and I do not let them **(35)** see that I know they have been here before; [I do this] in order not to embarrass them. And then they speak to me freely about their troubles and needs.

Although Sister N. tells me that is not the way to deal with beggars, and slams the door in their faces, when she is not there, I treat them as my Master would. Sometimes more is given when giving nothing, than when giving much in a rude manner.

1283 Often the Lord gives me interior knowledge concerning the persons I meet at the gate. One pitiable soul wanted to tell me a bit about herself. Taking advantage of the opportunity, I made her understand, in a delicate way, the miserable condition of her soul. She went away with a better disposition.

1284 September 17, [1937.] O Jesus, I see so much beauty scattered around me, beauty for which I give You **(36)** constant thanks. But I see that some souls are like stone, always cold and unfeeling. Even miracles hardly move them. Their eyes are always fixed on their feet, and so they see nothing but themselves.

1285 You have surrounded my life with Your tender and loving care, more than I can comprehend, for I will understand Your goodness in its entirety only when the veil is lifted. I desire that my whole life be but one act of thanksgiving to You, O God.

1286 + Thank You, O God, for all the graces
Which unceasingly You lavish upon me,

Graces which enlighten me with the brilliance of the sun,
For by them You show me the sure way.

Thank You, O Lord, for creating me,
For calling me into being from nothingness,
For imprinting Your divinity on my soul,
The work of sheer merciful love.

(37) Thank You, O God, for Holy Baptism
Which engrafted me into Your family,
A gift great beyond all thought or expression
Which transforms my soul.

Thank You, O Lord, for Holy Confession,
For that inexhaustible spring of great mercy,
For that inconceivable fountain of graces
In which sin-tainted souls become purified.

Thank You, O Jesus, for Holy Communion
In which You give us Yourself.
I feel Your Heart beating within my breast
As You cause Your divine life to unfold within me.

Thank You, O Holy Spirit, for the Sacrament of Confirmation,
Which dubs me Your knight
And gives strength to my soul at each moment,
Protecting me from evil.

Thank You, O God, for the grace of a vocation
For being called to serve You alone,
Leading me to make You my sole love,
An unequal honor for my soul.

(38) Thank You, O Lord, for perpetual vows,
For that union of pure love,
For having deigned to unite Your pure heart with mine
And uniting my heart to Yours in the purest of bonds.

Thank You, O Lord, for the Sacrament of Anointing
Which, in my final moments, will give me strength;

My help in battle, my guide to salvation,
Fortifying my soul till we rejoice forever.

Thank You, O God, for all the inspirations
That Your goodness lavishes upon me,
For the interior lights given my soul,
Which the heart senses, but words cannot express.

Thank You, O Holy Trinity, for the vastness of the graces
Which You have lavished on me unceasingly through life.
My gratitude will intensify as the eternal dawn rises,
When, for the first time, I sing to Your glory.

1287 + Despite the peace in my soul, I fight a continuous battle with the enemy of my soul. More and more, I am discovering his traps, and the battle flares up anew. **(39)** During interludes of calm, I exercise myself and keep watch, lest the enemy find me unprepared. And when I see his great fury, I stay inside the stronghold; that is, the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

1288 September 19, [1937]. Today, the Lord told me, **My daughter, write that it pains Me very much when religious souls receive the Sacrament of Love merely out of habit, as if they did not distinguish this food. I find neither faith nor love in their hearts. I go to such souls with great reluctance. It would be better if they did not receive Me.**

1289 Most sweet Jesus, set on fire my love for You and transform me into Yourself. Divinize me that my deeds may be pleasing to You. May this be accomplished by the power of the Holy Communion which I receive daily. Oh, how greatly I desire to be wholly transformed into You, O Lord!

1290 **(40)** September 19, 1937. Today, my own brother, Stanley, visited me. I rejoiced greatly in this beautiful soul, who also intends to devote himself to God's service. That is to say, God Himself is drawing him to His love. We talked for a long time about God, about His goodness. During this conversation with him, I learned how pleasing his soul was to God. I received permission from Mother Superior to see him more often. When

he asked my advice about entering religion, I replied, “Surely you know best what God is asking of you.” I mentioned the Jesuit Order, but said, “Enter wherever you like.” I promised to pray for him, and I decided to make a novena to the Sacred Heart through the intercession of Father Peter Skarga with the promise of having it announced in the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*,²¹³ because he is having great difficulties in this matter. I understood that, in this case, prayer was more useful than advice.

1291 **(41)** September 21. Having awakened several times during the night, I thanked God briefly, but with all my heart, for all the graces He has given to me and to our Congregation, [and] I reflected on His great goodness.

1292 When I received Holy Communion, I said to Him, “Jesus, I thought about You so many times last night,” and Jesus answered me, **And I thought of you before I called you into being.** “Jesus, in what way were You thinking about me?” **In terms of admitting you to My eternal happiness.** After these words, my soul was flooded with the love of God. I could not stop marveling at how much God loves us.

1293 It so happened that I fell again into a certain error, in spite of a sincere resolution not to do so — even though the lapse was a minor imperfection and rather involuntary — and at this I felt such acute pain in my soul that I interrupted my work and went **(42)** to the chapel for awhile. Falling at the feet of Jesus, with love and a great deal of pain, I apologized to the Lord, all the more ashamed because of the fact that in my conversation with Him after Holy Communion this very morning I had promised to be faithful to Him. Then I heard these words: **If it hadn’t been for this small imperfection, you wouldn’t have come to Me. Know that as often as you come to Me, humbling yourself and asking My forgiveness, I pour out a superabundance of graces on your soul, and your imperfection vanishes before My eyes, and I see only your love and your humility. You lose nothing but gain much...**

1294 The Lord has given me to know that when a soul does not accept the graces intended for it, another soul receives them immediately. O my Jesus, make me worthy of accepting Your graces because, of myself, I can do nothing. Without Your help, I cannot even utter Your Name worthily.

1295 **(43)** September 25, [1937.] When I learned how great are the difficulties in this whole work, I went to the Lord and said, “Jesus, don’t You see how they are hindering Your work?” And I heard a voice in my soul: **Do as much as is in your power, and don’t worry about the rest. These difficulties prove that this work is Mine. Be at peace so long as you do all that is in your power.**

1296 Today, I opened the gate for Mother Superior and knew interiorly that she was going to town on business regarding the work of the Divine Mercy. It is this superior who has contributed most to this whole work of mercy.

1297 Today I imprudently asked two poor children if they really had nothing to eat at home. The children, without answering me, walked away from the gate. I understood how difficult it was for them to speak about their poverty, so I went after them in a hurry and brought them back, **(44)** giving them as much as I had permission for.

1298 O God, show me Your mercy
According to the compassion of the Heart of Jesus.
Hear my sighs and entreaties,
And the tears of a contrite heart.

O Omnipotent, ever-merciful God,
Your compassion is never exhausted.
Although my misery is as vast as the sea,
I have complete trust in the mercy of the Lord.

O Eternal Trinity, yet ever-gracious God,
Your compassion is without measure.
And so I trust in the sea of Your mercy,
And sense You, Lord, though a veil holds me aloof.

May the omnipotence of Your mercy, O Lord.
Be glorified all over the world.
May its veneration never cease.
Proclaim, my soul, God’s mercy with fervor.

1299 **(45)** September 27, [1937]. Today, Mother Superior and I went to see a certain gentleman²¹⁴ where they were printing and painting small holy

cards of The Divine Mercy, and also the invocations and the chaplet, which have already received approbation. And we were also to see the improved larger image.²¹⁵ It very much resembles the original. This made me very happy.

1300 When I looked at this image, I was pierced with such a lively love for God that, for a moment, I did not know where I was. When we had finished our business, we went to the Church of the Most Holy Virgin Mary. We attended Holy Mass, during which the Lord gave me to know what a great number of souls would attain salvation through this work. Then I entered into an intimate conversation with the Lord, thanking Him for having condescended to grant me the grace of seeing how the veneration of His unfathomable mercy is spreading. I immersed myself in a profound prayer of thanksgiving. Oh, how great is God's generosity! Blessed be the Lord, who is faithful **(46)** in His promises...

1301 It is extraordinary how Mother Irene has so much light from God concerning this whole matter. She was the first to allow me to carry out the Lord's wishes, although it was not until two years after the revelation that she became my superior. And despite this fact, she was the first to go with me when the painting of the image was first undertaken. And now again, when some things concerning the Divine Mercy are being published, and small holy cards are being printed, again it is she who is going with me [to take care of] this matter. God has ordained all this in a mysterious way, because this was begun in Vilnius, and now God's will has so directed the circumstances that this matter is being continued in Cracow. I know how pleasing this superior is to God; I see how God is directing everything and wants me to be under her protection during these important times.... Thank You, Lord, for such superiors, who live in the love **(47)** and fear of God. That is why I pray for her most of all, because she has put herself out the most for the sake of this work of Divine Mercy....

1302 September 29, [1937]. Today, I have come to understand many of God's mysteries. I have come to know that Holy Communion remains in me until the next Holy Communion. A vivid and clearly felt presence of God continues in my soul. The awareness of this plunges me into deep recollection, without the slightest effort on my part. My heart is a living

tabernacle in which the living Host is reserved. I have never sought God in some far-off place, but within myself. It is in the depths of my own being that I commune with my God.

1303 My God, despite all the graces, I long without cease to be eternally united with my God; and the better I know Him, the more ardently I desire Him.

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(48) J.M.J.

1304 With longing I gaze into the starlit sky,
Into the sapphire of fathomless firmaments.
There the pure heart leaps out to find You, O God,
And yearns to be freed of the bonds of the flesh.

With great longing, I gaze upon you, my homeland,
When will this, my exile, come to an end?
O Jesus, such is the call of Your bride
Who suffers agony in her thirst for You.

With longing, I gaze at the footprints of the saints
Who crossed this wilderness on their way to the fatherland.
They left me the example of their virtue and their counsels,
And they say to me, "Patience, Sister, soon the fetters will break."

But my longing soul hears not these words.
Ardently it yearns for its Lord and its God,
And it understands not human language,
Because it is enamored of Him alone.

My longing soul, wounded with love,
Forces its way through all created things
(49) And unites itself with infinite eternity,
With the Lord whom my heart has espoused.

Allow my longing soul, O God,
To be drowned in Your Divine Three-fold Essence.
Fulfill my desires, for which I humbly beg You,
With a heart brimming with love's fire.

1305 A certain person came to the door today and asked to be admitted as one of our students. But she could not be admitted. She was in great need of our house. During the conversation which I had with her, the Passion of Jesus was renewed in me. When she had gone, I undertook one of the severest mortifications. Nevertheless, the next time I will not let such a soul get away. For three days I suffered much on her account. How much I regret that our institutions are so small and that they cannot accommodate a greater number of souls. My Jesus, You know how much I grieve over every straying sheep....

1306 **(50)** + O humility, lovely flower, I see how few souls possess you. Is it because you are so beautiful and at the same time so difficult to attain? O yes, it is both the one and the other. Even God takes great pleasure in her. The floodgates of heaven are open to a humble soul, and a sea of graces flows down upon her. O how beautiful is a humble soul! From her heart, as from a censer, rises a varied and most pleasing fragrance which breaks through the skies and reaches God Himself, filling His Most Sacred Heart with joy. God refuses nothing to such a soul; she is all-powerful and influences the destiny of the whole world. God raises such a soul up to His very throne, and the more she humbles herself, the more God stoops down to her, pursuing her with His graces and accompanying her at every moment with His omnipotence. Such a soul is most deeply united with God. O humility, strike deep roots in my whole being. O Virgin most pure, but also most humble, help me to attain deep **(51)** humility. Now I understand why there are so few saints; it is because so few souls are deeply humble.

1307 Eternal Love, Depth of Mercy, O Triune Holiness, yet One God, whose bosom is full of love for all, as a good Father You scorn no one. O Love of God, Living Fountain, pour Yourself out upon us, Your unworthy creatures. May our misery not hold back the torrents of Your love, for indeed, there is no limit to Your mercy.

1308 + Jesus, I have noticed that You seem to be less concerned with me. **Yes, My child, I am replacing Myself with your spiritual director [Father Andrasz]. He is taking care of you according to My will. Respect his every word as My own. He is the veil behind which I am hiding. Your director and I are one; his words are My words.**

1309 **(52)** When I make the Way of the Cross, I am deeply moved at the twelfth station. Here I reflect on the omnipotence of God's mercy which passed through the Heart of Jesus. In this open wound of the Heart of Jesus I enclose all poor humans... and those individuals whom I love, as often as I make the Way of the Cross. From that Fount of Mercy issued the two rays; that is, the Blood and the Water. With the immensity of their grace they flood the whole world....

1310 When one is ill and weak, one must constantly make efforts to measure up to what others are doing as a matter of course. But even those matter-of-course things cannot always be managed. Nevertheless, thank You, Jesus, for everything, because it is not the greatness of the works, but the greatness of the effort that will be rewarded. What is done out of love is not small, O my Jesus, for Your eyes see everything. **(53)** I do not know why I feel so terribly unwell in the morning; I have to muster all my strength to get out of bed, sometimes even to the point of heroism. The thought of Holy Communion gives me back a little more strength. And so, the day starts with a struggle and ends with a struggle. When I go to take my rest, I feel like a soldier returning from the battlefield. You alone, my Lord and Master, know what this day has contained.

1311 Meditation. During meditation, the sister on the kneeler next to mine keeps coughing and clearing her throat, sometimes without a break. It occurred to me once that I might take another place for the time of the meditation, because Mass had already been offered. But then I thought that if I did change my place, the sister would notice this and might feel hurt that I had moved away from her. So I decided to continue in prayer in my usual place, **(54)** and to offer this act of patience to God. Toward the end of the meditation, my soul was flooded with God's consolation, and this to the limit of what my heart could bear; and the Lord gave me to know that if I had moved away from that sister I would have moved away also from those graces that flowed into my soul.

1312 + Jesus came to the main entrance today, under the guise of a poor young man. This young man, emaciated, barefoot and bareheaded, and with his clothes in tatters, was frozen because the day was cold and rainy. He asked for something hot to eat. So I went to the kitchen, but found nothing there for the poor. But, after searching around for some time, I

succeeded in finding some soup, which I reheated and into which I crumbled some bread, and I gave it to the poor young man, who ate it. As I was taking the bowl from him, he gave me to know that He was the Lord of heaven and earth. When I saw Him as He was, He vanished from my sight. (55) When I went back in and reflected on what had happened at the gate, I heard these words in my soul: **My daughter, the blessings of the poor who bless Me as they leave this gate have reached My ears. And your compassion, within the bounds of obedience, has pleased Me, and this is why I came down from My throne — to taste the fruits of your mercy.**

1313 O my Jesus, now everything is clear to me, and I understand all that has just happened. I somehow felt and asked myself what sort of a poor man is this who radiates such modesty. From that moment on, there was stirred up in my heart an even purer love toward the poor and the needy. Oh, how happy I am that my superiors have given me such a task! I understand that mercy is manifold; one can do good always and everywhere and at all times. An ardent love of God sees all around itself constant opportunities to share itself through deed, word and prayer. Now I understand (56) the words which You spoke to me, O Lord, some time ago.

1314 + Oh, what great efforts I must make to carry out my duties well when my health is so poor! This will be known to You alone, O Christ.

1315 + In times of interior desolation I do not lose my peace, because I know that God never abandons a soul, except perhaps only when the soul itself breaks the bond of love by its unfaithfulness. However, all creatures without exception depend on the Lord and are maintained by His omnipotence. Some are under the rule of love, others under the rule of justice. It depends on us under which rule we want to live, because no one is refused the aid of sufficient grace. I am not frightened at all by my apparent abandonment. I examine myself more profoundly to discover whether this is due to my fault. If this is not the case — then may [the Lord] be blessed!

1316 (57) October 1, 1937. **Daughter, I need sacrifice lovingly accomplished, because that alone has meaning for Me. Enormous indeed are the debts of the world which are due to Me; pure souls**

can pay them by their sacrifice, exercising mercy in spirit.

1317 I understand Your words, Lord, and the magnitude of the mercy that ought to shine in my soul. Jesus: **I know, My daughter, that you understand it and that you do everything within your power. But write this for the many souls who are often worried because they do not have the material means with which to carry out an act of mercy. Yet spiritual mercy, which requires neither permissions nor storehouses, is much more meritorious and is within the grasp of every soul. If a soul does not exercise mercy somehow or other, it will not obtain My mercy on the day of judgment. Oh, if only souls knew how to gather eternal treasure for themselves, they would not be judged, for they would forestall My judgment with their mercy.**

1318 (58) October 10, [1937]. O my Jesus, in thanksgiving for Your many graces, I offer You my body and soul, intellect and will, and all the sentiments of my heart. Through the vows, I have given myself entirely to You; I have then nothing more that I can offer You. Jesus said to me, **My daughter, you have not offered Me that which is really yours.** I probed deeply into myself and found that I love God with all the faculties of my soul and, unable to see what it was that I had not yet given to the Lord, I asked, “Jesus, tell me what it is, and I will give it to You at once with a generous heart.” Jesus said to me with kindness, **Daughter, give Me your misery, because it is your exclusive property.** At that moment, a ray of light illumined my soul, and I saw the whole abyss of my misery. In that same moment I nestled close to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus with so much trust that even if I had the sins of all the damned weighing on my conscience, I would not have doubted God’s mercy (59) but, with a heart crushed to dust, I would have thrown myself into the abyss of Your mercy. I believe, O Jesus, that You would not reject me, but would absolve me through the hand of Your representative.

1319 You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us.

1320 **At three o’clock, implore My mercy, especially for sinners; and, if only for a brief moment, immerse yourself in My Passion,**

particularly in My abandonment at the moment of agony. This is the hour of great mercy for the whole world. I will allow you to enter into My mortal sorrow. In this hour, I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me in virtue of My Passion....

(60)+

J. M. J.

1321 Hail, most merciful Heart of Jesus,
Living Fountain of all graces,
Our sole shelter, our only refuge;
In You I have the light of hope.

Hail, most compassionate Heart of my God,
Unfathomable living Fount of Love
From which gushes life for sinful man
And the Spring of all sweetness.

Hail, open Wound of the Most Sacred Heart,
From which the rays of mercy issued forth
And from which it was given us to draw life
With the vessel of trust alone.

Hail, God's goodness, incomprehensible,
Never to be measured or fathomed,
Full of love and mercy, though always holy,
Yet, like a good mother, ever bent o'er us.

Hail, Throne of Mercy, Lamb of God,
Who gave Your life in sacrifice for me,
Before whom my soul humbles itself daily,
Living in faith profound.

[End of Notebook Four]

*Sister Faustina of the Blessed
Sacrament of the Congregation of the
Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy*

NOTEBOOK V

+

(1) J.M.J.

1322 The barque of my life sails along
Amid darkness and shadows of night,
And I see no shore;
I am sailing the high seas.

The slightest storm would drown me,
Engulfing my boat in the swirling depths,
If You Yourself did not watch over me, O God,
At each instant and moment of my life.

Amid the roaring waves
I sail peacefully, trustingly,
And gaze like a child into the distance without fear,
Because You, O Jesus, are my Light.

Dread and terror is all about me,
But within my soul is peace more profound than the depths of the sea,
For he who is with You, O Lord, will not perish;
Of this Your love assures me, O God.

Though a host of dangers surround me,
None of them do I fear, for I fix my gaze on the starry sky,
And I sail along bravely and merrily,
As becomes a pure heart.

And if the ship of my life sails so peacefully,
This is due to but one thing above all:
You are my helmsman, O God.
This I confess with utmost humility.

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(2) J. M. J.

1323 O my God, I love You.

Sister Faustina
of the Blessed Sacrament.

Cracow, October 20, 1937.

1324 + I bow down before You, O Bread of Angels,
With deep faith, hope and love
And from the depths of my soul I worship You,
Though I am but nothingness.

I bow down before You, O hidden God
And love You with all my heart.
The veils of mystery hinder me not at all;
I love You as do Your chosen ones in heaven.

I bow down before You, O Lamb of God
Who take away the sins of my soul,
Whom I receive into my heart each morn,
You who are my saving help.

+

(3) J. M. J.

Cracow, October 20, 1937. Fifth Notebook

1325 O my God, let everything that is in me praise You, my Lord and Creator; and with every beat of my heart I want to praise Your unfathomable mercy. I want to tell souls of Your goodness and encourage them to trust in Your mercy. That is my mission, which You Yourself have entrusted to me, O Lord, in this life and in the life to come.

1326 We are beginning an eight-day retreat today.²¹⁶ Jesus, my Master, help me to make these holy retreat exercises with the greatest fervor possible. May Your Spirit guide me, O God, into the most profound depths of knowledge of Yourself, and of my own self as well. For I shall love You only as much as I shall come to know You. And I shall despise myself only as much as I shall come to know my misery. I know, Lord, that You will not refuse me Your help. I desire to come out of this retreat a saint, even though human (4) eyes will not notice this, not even those of the superiors. I abandon myself entirely to the action of Your grace. Let Your will be accomplished entirely in me, O Lord.

1327 First day. Jesus: **My daughter, this retreat will be an uninterrupted**

contemplation. I will bring you into this retreat as into a spiritual banquet. Close to My merciful Heart, you will meditate upon all the graces your heart has received, and a deep peace will accompany your soul. I want the eyes of your soul to be always fixed on My holy will, since it is in this way that you will please Me most. No sacrifices can be compared to this. Throughout all the exercises you will remain close to My Heart. You shall not undertake any reforms, because I will dispose of your whole life as I see fit. The priest who will preach the retreat will not speak a single word which will trouble you.

1328 My Jesus, I have already made two meditations, and I recognize, through them, that everything You have said is true. I am experiencing a profound peace, (5) and this peace flows from the witness of my conscience; that is to say, that I am always doing Your will, O Lord.

1329 In the meditation on the goal of man, I understood that this truth is deeply rooted in my soul, and that my deeds are therefore the more perfect. I know why I was created. All creatures taken together cannot take the place, for me, of my Creator. I know that God is my ultimate goal and so, in whatever I undertake, I take God into account.

1330 + Oh, how good it is to spend a retreat close to the most sweet heart of my God. I am in the wilderness with my Beloved. No one interrupts my sweet conversation with Him.

1331 Jesus, You Yourself have deigned to lay the foundations of my sanctity, as my cooperation has not amounted to much. You have taught me to set no store on the use and choice of created things, because my heart is, of itself, so weak. And this is why I have asked You, O my Master, to take no heed of the pain of my heart, (6) but to cut away whatever might hold me back from the path of love. I did not understand You, Lord, in times of sorrow, when You were effecting Your work in my soul; but today I understand You and rejoice in my freedom of spirit. Jesus Himself has seen to it that my heart has not been caught in the snares of any passion. I have come to know well from what dangers He has delivered me, and therefore my gratitude to my God knows no bounds.

1332 Second day. As I was meditating on the sin of the Angels and their

immediate punishment, I asked Jesus why the Angels had been punished as soon as they had sinned. I heard a voice: **Because of their profound knowledge of God. No person on earth, even though a great saint, has such knowledge of God as an Angel has.** Nevertheless, to me who am so miserable, You have shown Your mercy, O God, and this, time and time again. You carry me in the bosom of Your mercy and forgive me every time that I ask Your forgiveness with a contrite heart.

1333 Profound silence engulfs my soul. Not a single cloud hides the sun from me. I lay myself **(7)** entirely open to its rays, that His love may effect a complete transformation in me. I want to come out of this retreat a saint, and this, in spite of everything; that is to say, in spite of my wretchedness, I want to become a saint, and I trust that God's mercy can make a saint even out of such misery as I am, because I am utterly in good will. In spite of all my defeats, I want to go on fighting like a holy soul and to comport myself like a holy soul. I will not be discouraged by anything, just as nothing can discourage a soul who is holy. I want to live and die like a holy soul, with my eyes fixed on You, Jesus, stretched out on the Cross, as the model for my actions. I used to look around me for examples and found nothing which sufficed, and I noticed that my state of holiness seemed to falter. But from now on, my eyes are fixed on You, O Christ, who are for me the best of guides. I am confident that You will bless my efforts.

1334 + In the meditation on sin, the Lord gave me to know all the malice of sin and the ingratitude that is contained in it. I feel within my soul a great aversion for even the smallest sin. **(8)** However, the eternal truths I have been meditating on do not bring even a shadow of disturbance or unrest into my soul. And although I take them very much to heart, my contemplation is not thereby interrupted. In this contemplation, it is not transports of the heart that I experience, but a depth of peace and a wonderful silence. Although my love is great, I experience an extraordinary equilibrium. Even receiving the Eucharist causes no feeling, but brings me to a depth of union where my love and God's love are fused together as one.

1335 + Jesus has made known to me that I should pray for the sisters who are making the retreat. During prayer, I learned of the struggle that some are

undergoing, and I redoubled my prayers.

1336 + In this profound silence, I am better able to judge the condition of my soul. My soul is like clear water in which I can see everything: both my misery and the vastness of God's graces. And owing to this true knowledge of itself, my spirit is strengthened in deep humility. I expose my heart to the action of Your grace like a crystal exposed to the rays of the sun. **(9)** May Your image be reflected in it, O my God, to the extent that it is possible to be reflected in the heart of a creature. Let Your divinity radiate through me, O You who dwell in my soul.

1337 As I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament and greeting the five wounds of Jesus, at each salutation I felt a torrent of graces gushing into my soul, giving me a foretaste of heaven and absolute confidence in God's mercy.

1338 As I write these words, I hear the cry of Satan: "She's writing everything, she's writing everything, and because of this we are losing so much! Do not write about the goodness of God; He is just!" And howling with fury, he vanished.

1339 O merciful God, You do not despise us, but lavish Your graces on us continuously. You make us fit to enter Your kingdom, and in Your goodness You grant that human beings may fill the places vacated by the ungrateful angels. O God of great mercy, who turned Your sacred gaze away from the rebellious angels and turned it upon contrite man, **(10)** praise and glory be to Your unfathomable mercy, O God who do not despise the lowly heart.

1340 My Jesus, despite these graces which You send upon me, I feel that my nature, ennobled though it be, is not completely stilled; and so I keep a constant watch. I must struggle with many faults, knowing well that it is not the struggle which debases one, but cowardice and failure.

1341 When one's health is poor, there is much one has to bear. For when one is ill, but not in bed, one is not considered to be ill. For many reasons, therefore, there are constant occasions for sacrifices, and sometimes big ones. I understand now that only in eternity will many things be revealed. But I also understand that if God demands a sacrifice, He does not

withhold His grace, but gives it to the soul in abundance.

1342 My Jesus, let my sacrifice burn before Your throne in all silence, but with the full force of love, as I beg You to have mercy on souls.

1343 **(11)** Third day. In the meditation on death, I prepared myself as if for real death. I examined my conscience and searched all my affairs at the approach of death and, thanks be to grace, my affairs were directed toward that ultimate goal. This filled my heart with great gratitude to God, and I resolved to serve my God even more faithfully in the future. One thing alone is necessary: to put my old self to death and to begin a new life. In the morning, I prepared to receive Holy Communion as if it were to be the last in my life, and after Holy Communion I brought before my imagination my actual death, and I said the prayers for the dying and then the *De Profundis* for my own soul. My body was lowered into the grave, and I said to my soul, “See what has become of your body, a heap of dirt teeming with vermin — that is your inheritance.”

1344 O merciful God, who still allow me to live, give me strength that I may live a new life, the life of the spirit, over which death has no dominion. And with that, my heart was renewed, and I began a new life while still here on earth, a life of love of God. Nevertheless, I do not forget that **(12)** I am weakness itself, though I do not doubt even for a moment that I will obtain the help of Your grace, O God.

1345 + Fourth day. O Jesus, I have been feeling extraordinarily well, close to Your Heart, during this retreat. Nothing disturbs the depths of my peace. With one eye, I gaze on the abyss of my misery and with the other, on the abyss of Your mercy.

1346 During Holy Mass, which was celebrated by Father Andrasz, I saw the Infant Jesus who, with hands outstretched toward us, was sitting in the chalice being used at Holy Mass. After gazing at me penetratingly, He spoke these words: **As you see Me in this chalice, so I dwell in your heart.**

1347 + Holy Confession. After giving an account of my conscience, I was given the permissions I asked for: To wear the bracelet for half an hour every day during Holy Mass, and in times of difficulty, to wear the belt

for two hours. [Father said,] “Sister, persevere in this great faithfulness to the Lord Jesus.”

1348 **(13)** Fifth day. When I entered the chapel this morning, I learned that Mother Superior has had some trouble on my account. This hurt me very much. After Holy Communion, I leaned my head on the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and said, “O my Lord, I beg You, let all the consolation that I am experiencing through Your presence in my heart be poured out into the soul of my dear Mother Superior, who has had some trouble because of me, and this involuntarily on my part.”

1349 Jesus comforted me, saying that both our souls had benefited from this. But I begged the Lord to deign to spare me from being the occasion of anyone’s suffering, as my heart could not bear this.

1350 O white Host, You preserve my soul in whiteness; I fear the day when I might forsake You. You are the Bread of Angels, and thus also the Bread of Virgins.

1351 Jesus, my most perfect model, with my eyes fixed on You, I will go through life in Your footsteps, adapting nature to grace, according to Your most holy will and Your light which illumines my soul, trusting completely in Your help.

+

(14) J. M. J.

1352 Chart of inner control²¹⁷

Particular examen.

Unity with the merciful Christ. Because I am united to Jesus, I must be faithful always and everywhere, and I must be interiorly united with the Lord, while exteriorly observing fidelity to the rule, particularly that of silence.

1353 November: victories – 53, defeats – 2

December: victories – 104, defeats –

January: victories – 78, defeats – 1

February: victories – 59, defeats – 1

March: victories – 50

April: victories – 61

May:

June:

July:

August:

September:

October:

1354 When I hesitate on how to act in some situations, I always ask Love. It advises best.

1356 **(16)** Sixth day. O my God, I am ready to accept Your will in every detail, whatever it may be. However You may direct me, I will bless You. Whatever You ask of me I will do with the help of Your grace. Whatever Your holy will regarding me might be, I accept it with my whole heart and soul, taking no account of what my corrupt nature tells me.

1357 Once, when I was passing by a group of people, I asked the Lord if they were all in the state of grace, because I did not feel His sufferings. **Because you do not feel My sufferings, it does not follow that they must all be in the state of grace. At times, I allow you to be aware of the condition of certain souls, and I give you the grace of suffering solely because I use you as the instrument of their conversion.**

1358 Where there is genuine virtue, there must be sacrifice as well; one's whole life must be a sacrifice. It is only by means of sacrifice that souls can become useful. It is my self-sacrifice which, in my relationship with my neighbor, can give glory to God, but God's love must flow through this sacrifice, because everything is concentrated in this love and takes its value from it.

1359 **(17)** **Bear in mind that when you come out of this retreat, I shall be dealing with you as with a perfect soul. I want to hold you in My hand as a pliant tool, perfectly adapted to the completion of My works.**

1360 O Lord, You who penetrate my whole being and the most secret depths of my soul, You see that I desire You alone and long only for the fulfillment of Your holy will, paying no heed to difficulties or sufferings

or humiliations or to what others might think.

1361 This firm resolution to become a saint is extremely pleasing to Me. I bless your efforts and will give you opportunities to sanctify yourself. Be watchful that you lose no opportunity that My providence offers you for sanctification. If you do not succeed in taking advantage of an opportunity, do not lose your peace, but humble yourself profoundly before Me and, with great trust, immerse yourself completely in My mercy. In this way, you gain more than you have lost, because more favor is granted to a humble soul than the soul itself asks for...

1362 **(18)** + Seventh day. I have come to a knowledge of my destiny; that is, an inward certainty that I will attain sanctity. This deep conviction has filled my soul with gratitude to God, and I have given back all the glory to God, because I know very well what I am of myself.

1363 I am coming out of this retreat thoroughly transformed by God's love. My soul is beginning a new life, earnestly and courageously; although outwardly my life will not change, and no one will notice it, nevertheless, pure love is [now] the guide of my life and, externally, it is mercy which is its fruit. I feel that I have been totally imbued with God and, with this God, I am going back to my everyday life, so drab, tiresome and wearying, trusting that He whom I feel in my heart will change this drabness into my personal sanctity.

In profound silence, close to Your merciful Heart, my soul is maturing during this retreat. In the clear rays of Your love, my soul has lost its tartness **(19)** and has become a sweet and ripe fruit.

1364 Now I can be wholly useful to the Church by my personal sanctity, which throbs with life in the whole Church, for we all make up one organism in Jesus. That is why I endeavor to make the soil of my heart bear good fruit. Although the human eye may perhaps never see it, there will nevertheless come a day when it will become apparent that many souls have been fed and will continue to be fed with this fruit.

1365 O Eternal Love, You who enkindle a new life within me, a life of love and of mercy. Support me with Your grace, so that I may worthily answer

Your call, so that what You Yourself have intended to accomplish in souls through me, might indeed be accomplished.

My God, I see the radiance of eternal dawn. My whole soul bounds toward You, O Lord; nothing any longer holds me back, nothing ties me to earth. Help me, O Lord, to bear the rest of my days with patience. The sacrifice of my love burns incessantly before Your Majesty, but so silently that only Your divine eye sees it, O God, and no other creature is capable of perceiving it.

1366 **(20)** O my Lord, although so many things occupy me, although I have this work at heart, although I desire the triumph of the Church and the salvation of souls, although all the persecutions of Your faithful ones affect me, although the fall of each soul is painful to me, yet, above and beyond all this, I still have a profound peace in my soul which neither triumphs nor desires nor adversities can disturb because, for me, You are above all dispensations, my Lord and my God.

1367 Eighth day. O my Lord, while calling to mind all Your blessings, in the presence of Your Most Sacred Heart, I have felt the need to be particularly grateful for so many graces and blessings from God. I want to plunge myself in thanksgiving before the Majesty of God and to continue in this prayer of thanksgiving for seven days and seven nights; and although I will outwardly carry out all my duties, my spirit will nonetheless stand continually before the Lord, and all my exercises will be imbued with the spirit of thanksgiving. Each evening, I will kneel for a half hour in my cell, alone with the Lord. As often as I shall awake at night, **(21)** I shall steep myself in a prayer of thanksgiving. In this way I want to repay, at least in some small way, for the immensity of God's blessings.

1368 However, in order to make all this more pleasing in the eyes of God and to remove the least shadow of doubt from my mind, I went to my spiritual director [Father Andrasz] and revealed these desires of my soul to him; that is to say, the desire to be steeped in such thanksgiving. I received permission for everything, except that I should not force myself to pray at night should I awaken.

1369 With what great joy I returned to the convent! And on the next day I

began this great act of thanksgiving by renewing my vows. My soul became thoroughly immersed in God, and there issued from my whole being but one single flame of gratitude and thanksgiving to God. There were not many words, because God's blessings, like a fierce fire, consumed my soul, and all sufferings and sorrows were like wood thrown into the flames, without which the fire would go out. I called upon all heaven and earth to join me in my act of thanksgiving.

1370 **(22)** The retreat has come to an end, those beautiful days of communing alone with the Lord Jesus. I made this retreat in the way Jesus wanted me to make it, and as He had told me to on the first day of the retreat; that is, in the deepest peace, I meditated on God's blessings. I have never made a retreat like this before. My soul was more profoundly strengthened by this peace than it would have been by any tremors or emotions. In the rays of love, I saw everything as it really is.

Coming out of this retreat, I feel thoroughly transformed by God's love.

1371 O Lord, deify my actions so that they will merit eternity; although my weakness is great, I trust in the power of Your grace, which will sustain me.

1372 My Jesus, You know that from my earliest years I have wanted to become a great saint; that is to say, I have wanted to love You with a love so great that there would be no soul who has hitherto loved You so. At first these desires of mine were kept secret, **(23)** and only Jesus knew of them. But today I cannot contain them within my heart; I would like to cry out to the whole world, "Love God, because He is good and great is His mercy!"

1373 O humdrum days, filled with darkness, I look upon you with a solemn and festive eye. How great and solemn is the time that gives us the chance to gather merits for eternal heaven! I understand how the saints made use of it.

1374 October 30, 1937. Today, during the religious ceremonies^{[218](#)} taking place during Mass, and the second day of thanksgiving, I saw the Lord Jesus in great beauty, and He said to me, My daughter, I have not released you from taking action. I answered, "Lord, my hand is too feeble

for such work.” Yes, I know; but joined with My right hand you will accomplish everything. Nevertheless, be obedient, be obedient to the confessors. I will give them light on how to direct you. “Lord, I already wanted to begin the work in Your Name, but Father S. keeps putting it off.” Jesus answered me, I know this; so do just what is within your power, but you must never withdraw your efforts.

1375 **(24)** November 1, 1937.

After Vespers today, there was a procession to the cemetery. I could not go, because I was on duty at the gate. But that did not stop me at all from praying for the souls. As the procession was returning from the cemetery to the chapel, my soul felt the presence of many souls. I understood the great justice of God, how each one had to pay off the debt to the last cent.

1376 The Lord gave me an occasion to practice patience through a particular person with whom I have to carry out a certain task. She is slower than anyone I have ever seen. One has to arm oneself with great patience to listen to her tedious talk.

1377 November 5. This morning, five unemployed men came to the gate and insisted on being let in. When Sister N. had argued with them for quite a while and could not make them go away, she then came to the chapel **(25)** to find Mother [Irene], who told me to go. When I was still a good way from the gate I could hear them banging loudly. At first, I was overcome with doubt and fear, and I did not know whether to open the gate or, like Sister N., to answer them through the little window. But suddenly I heard a voice in my soul saying, **Go and open the gate and talk to them as sweetly as you talk to Me.**

I opened the gate at once and approached the most menacing of them and began to speak to them with such sweetness and calm that they did not know what to do with themselves. And they too began to speak gently and said, “Well, it’s too bad that the convent can’t give us work.” And they went away peacefully. I felt clearly that Jesus, whom I had received in Holy Communion just an hour before, had worked in their hearts through me. Oh, how good it is to act under God’s inspiration!

1378 I felt worse today, and I went to Mother Superior, intending to ask her

for permission to go to bed. However, before I could ask for permission, (26) Mother Superior said to me, “Sister, you must somehow manage by yourself at the gate, because I am taking the girl to work at the cabbage, since there is no one else for the cabbage.” I said — good, and left the room. When I got to the gate, I felt unusually strong, and I was at my post all day and felt well. I experienced the power of holy obedience.

1379 November 10, [1937]. When Mother [Irene] showed me the booklet with the Chaplet, the litany and the novena, I asked her to let me look it over. As I was glancing through it, Jesus gave me to know interiorly: **Already there are many souls who have been drawn to My love by this image. My mercy acts in souls through this work.** I learned that many souls had experienced God’s grace.

1380 I learned that Mother Superior would have quite a heavy cross to bear, together with physical suffering, but that it would not last long.²¹⁹

1381 (27) + It occurred to me to take my medicine, not by the spoonful, but just a little at a time, because it was expensive. Instantly, I heard a voice, **My daughter, I do not like such conduct. Accept with gratitude everything I give you through the superiors, and in this way you will please Me more.**

1382 + When Sister Dominic²²⁰ died at about one o’clock in the night, she came to me and gave me to know that she was dead. I prayed fervently for her. In the morning, the sisters told me that she was no longer alive, and I replied that I knew, because she had visited me. The sister infirmarian [Sister Chrysostom] asked me to help dress her. And then when I was alone with her, the Lord gave me to know that she was still suffering in purgatory. I redoubled my prayers for her. However, despite the zeal with which I always pray for our deceased sisters, I got mixed up as regards the days, and instead of offering three days of prayer, as the rule directs us to do, by mistake I offered only two days. On the fourth day, she gave me to know that I still owed her prayers, and that she was in need of them. I immediately (28) formed the intention of offering the whole day for her, and not just that day but much more, as love of neighbor dictated to me.

1383 Because Sister Dominic, after her death, gave the appearance of looking

so well, some sisters said that perhaps she was only in a coma, and one of the sisters suggested to me that we ought to go and put a mirror to her mouth to see if it would mist, because it would if she were alive. I said all right, and we did as we said, but the mirror did not mist, although it seemed to us as if it had. Nevertheless, the Lord gave me to know how much this had displeased Him, and I was severely admonished never to act again against my inner convictions. I humbled myself profoundly before the Lord and asked His pardon.

1384 I see a certain priest [probably Father Sopocko] whom God loves greatly, but whom Satan hates terribly because he is leading many souls to a high degree of sanctity and has (29) regard only for God's glory. But I keep asking God that his patience with those who constantly oppose him might not run out. Where Satan himself can do no harm, he uses people.

1385 November 19. After Communion today, Jesus told me how much He desires to come to human hearts. **I desire to unite Myself with human souls; My great delight is to unite Myself with souls. Know, My daughter, that when I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, My hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul. But souls do not even pay any attention to Me; they leave Me to Myself and busy themselves with other things. Oh, how sad I am that souls do not recognize Love! They treat Me as a dead object.** I answered Jesus, "O Treasure of my heart, the only object of my love and entire delight of my soul, I want to adore You in my heart as You are adored on the throne of Your eternal glory. My love wants to make up to You (30) at least in part for the coldness of so great a number of souls. Jesus, behold my heart which is for You a dwelling place to which no one else has entry. You alone repose in it as in a beautiful garden.

1386 O my Jesus, farewell; I must go already to take up my tasks. But I will prove my love for You with sacrifice, neither neglecting nor letting any chance for practicing it slip by."

When I left the chapel, Mother Superior [Irene] said to me, "You will not go to the catechetical lecture, Sister, but will remain on duty." Very well, Jesus; I thus had, throughout the day, very many opportunities for sacrifice. I omitted none, owing to the strength of spirit I drew from Holy

Communion.

1387 There are times in life when a soul is in such a state that it does not seem to understand human speech. Everything tires it, and nothing but ardent prayer will put it at ease. In fervent prayer the soul finds relief and, even if it wanted explanations from creatures, these would only make it more restless.

1388 **(31)** + During one time of prayer, I learned how pleasing to God was the soul of Father Andrasz. He is a true child of God. It is rare that divine sonship shines forth so clearly in a soul, and this because he has a special devotion to the Mother of God.

1389 O my Jesus, although I have such very strong impulses, I am to act on them slowly, and this only in order not to spoil Your work with my haste. O my Jesus, You give me to know Your mysteries, and You want me to transmit them to other souls. Soon now it will be possible for me to act. At the moment of apparent absolute destruction, my mission, now no longer hindered by anything, will begin. Such is the will of God in this, and it will not change; although many persons will oppose it, nothing will change God's will.

1390 I see Father Sopocko, how his mind is busily occupied and working in God's cause in order to present the wishes of God to the officials of the Church. As a result of his efforts, a new **(32)** light will shine in the Church of God for the consolation of souls. Although for the present his soul is filled with bitterness, as though that were to be the reward for his efforts in the cause of the Lord, this will not however be the case. I see his joy, which nothing will diminish. God will grant him some of this joy already here on earth. I have never before come upon such great faithfulness to God as distinguishes this soul.

1391 During supper in the refectory today, I felt God's gaze in the depths of my heart. Such a vivid presence pervaded my soul that, for a while, I had no idea where I was. The sweet presence of God kept filling my soul and, at times, I could not understand what the sisters were saying to me.

1392 All the good that is in me is due to Holy Communion. I owe everything to it. I feel that this holy fire has transformed me completely. Oh, how

happy I am to be a dwelling place for You, O Lord! My heart is a temple
in which You dwell continually...

+

(33) J. M. J.

1393 Jesus, delight of my soul, Bread of Angels,
My whole being is plunged in You,
And I live Your divine life as do the elect in heaven,
And the reality of this life will not cease, though I be laid in the grave.

Jesus-Eucharist, Immortal God,
Who dwell in my heart without cease,
When I possess You, death itself can do me no harm.
Love tells me that I will see You at life's end.

Permeated by Your divine life,
I gaze with assurance at the heavens thrown open for me,
And death will shame-facedly go away, empty-handed,
For Your divine life is contained within my soul.

And although by Your holy will, O Lord,
Death is to touch my body,
I want this dissolution to come as quickly as possible,
For through it I am entering eternal life.

Jesus-Eucharist, life of my soul,
You have raised me up to the eternal spheres,
And this, by Your agony and death midst terrible tortures.

(34) 26 [November 1937].

1394 Monthly one-day retreat.

In the course of this retreat, the Lord has given me the light to know His will more profoundly and to abandon myself completely to the holy will of God. This light has confirmed me in profound peace, making me understand that I should fear nothing except sin. Whatever God sends me, I accept with complete submission to His holy will. Wherever He puts me, I will try faithfully to do His holy will, as well as His wishes, to the

extent of my power to do so, even if the will of God were to be as hard and difficult for me as was the will of the Heavenly Father for His Son, as He prayed in the Garden of Olives. I have come to see that if the will of the Heavenly Father was fulfilled in this way in His well-beloved Son, it will be fulfilled in us in exactly the same way: by suffering, persecution, abuse, disgrace. It is through all this that my soul becomes like unto Jesus. And the greater the sufferings, the more I see that I am becoming like Jesus. This is the surest way. If some other way were better, Jesus would have shown it to me. Sufferings in no way **(35)** take away my peace. On the other hand, although I enjoy profound peace, that peace does not lessen my experience of suffering. Although my face is often bowed to the ground, and my tears flow profusely, at the same time my soul is filled with profound peace and happiness...

1395 I want to hide myself in Your Most Merciful Heart as a dewdrop does in a flower blossom. Enclose me in this blossom against the frost of the world. No one can conceive the happiness which my heart enjoys in its solitude, alone with God.

1396 Today I heard a voice in my soul: **Oh, if sinners knew My mercy, they would not perish in such great numbers. Tell sinful souls not to be afraid to approach Me; speak to them of My great mercy.**

1397 The Lord said to me, **The loss of each soul plunges Me into mortal sadness. You always console Me when you (36) pray for sinners. The prayer most pleasing to Me is prayer for the conversion of sinners. Know, My daughter, that this prayer is always heard and answered.**

1398 Advent is approaching. I want to prepare my heart for the coming of the Lord Jesus by silence and recollection of spirit, uniting myself with the Most Holy Mother and faithfully imitating Her virtue of silence, by which She found pleasure in the eyes of God Himself. I trust that, by Her side, I will persevere in this resolution.

1399 When I entered the chapel for a moment in the evening, I felt a terrible thorn in my head. This lasted for a short time, but the pricking was so painful that in an instant my head dropped onto the communion rail. It seemed to me that the thorn had thrust itself into my brain. But all this is nothing; it is all for the sake of souls, to obtain God's mercy for them.

1400 I live from one hour to the next and am not able to get along in any other way. I want to make the best possible use of the present moment, faithfully accomplishing everything that it gives me. In all things, I depend on God with unwavering trust.

1401 **(37)** Yesterday I received a letter from Father Sopocko. I learned that God's work is progressing, however slowly. I am very happy about this, and I have redoubled my prayers for this entire work. I have come to learn that, for the present, so far as my participation in the work is concerned, the Lord is asking for prayer and sacrifice. Action on my part could indeed thwart God's plans, as Father Sopocko wrote in yesterday's letter. O my Jesus, grant me the grace to be an obedient instrument in Your hands. I have learned from this letter how great is the light which God grants to this priest. This confirms me in the conviction that God will carry out this work through him despite the mounting obstacles. I know well that the greater and the more beautiful the work is, the more terrible will be the storms that rage against it.

1402 God, in his unfathomable decrees, often allows it to be that those who have expended most effort in accomplishing some work do not enjoy its fruits here on earth; God reserves all their joy for eternity. But for all that, God sometimes lets them know how much their efforts please Him. **(38)** And such moments strengthen them for further struggles and ordeals. These are the souls that bear closest resemblance to the Savior who, in the work which He founded here on earth, tasted nothing but bitterness.

1403 O my Jesus, may You be blessed for everything! I rejoice that Your most holy will is being accomplished. That is quite enough to make me happy.

1404 Hidden Jesus, in You lies all my strength. From my most tender years, the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has attracted me to Himself. Once, when I was seven years old, at a Vesper Service, conducted before the Lord Jesus in the monstrance, the love of God was imparted to me for the first time and filled my little heart; and the Lord gave me understanding of divine things. From that day until this, my love for the hidden God has been growing constantly to the point of closest intimacy. All the strength of my soul flows from the Blessed Sacrament. I spend all my free moments in conversation with Him. He is my Master.

1405 **(39)** November 30, 1937. When I was going upstairs this evening, a strange dislike for everything having to do with God suddenly came over me. At that, I heard Satan who said to me, “Think no more about this work. God is not as merciful as you say He is. Do not pray for sinners, because they will be damned all the same, and by this work of mercy you expose your own self to damnation. Talk no more about this mercy of God with your confessor and especially not with Father Sopocko and Father Andrasz.” At this point, the voice took the appearance of my Guardian Angel, and at that moment I replied,

“I know who you are: the father of lies [cf. Jn. 8:44].” I made the sign of the cross, and the angel vanished with great racket and fury.

1406 Today, the Lord gave me to know interiorly that He would never abandon me. He gave me to know His majesty and His holiness as well as His love and mercy towards me; and He gave me a deeper knowledge of my own wretchedness. However, this great misery of mine does not deprive me of trust. On the contrary, the better I have come to know my own misery, the stronger has become my trust **(40)** in God’s mercy. I have come to understand how all this depends on the Lord. I know that no one will touch a single hair of my head without His willing it.

1407 When I was receiving Holy Communion today, I noticed in the cup a Living Host, which the priest gave to me. When I returned to my place I asked the Lord, “Why was one Host alive, since You are equally alive under each of the species?” The Lord answered me, **That is so. I am the same under each of the species, but not every soul receives Me with the same living faith as you do, My daughter, and therefore I cannot act in their souls as I do in yours.**

1408 I was present at Holy Mass celebrated by Father Sopocko. During the Mass, I saw the Infant Jesus who, touching the priest’s forehead with His finger, said to me, **His thought is closely united to Mine, so be at peace about what concerns My work. (41) I will not let him make a mistake, and you should do nothing without his permission.** This filled my soul with great peace as regards everything that has to do with this work.

1409 + Today the Lord Jesus is giving me an awareness of Himself and of

His most tender love and care for me. He is bringing me to understand deeply how everything depends on His will, and how He allows certain difficulties precisely for our merit, so that our fidelity might be clearly manifest. And through this, I have been given strength for suffering and self-denial.

1410 Today [December 7, 1937] is the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. During the midday meal, in an instant, God gave me to know the greatness of my destiny; that is, His closeness, which for all eternity will not be taken away from me, and He did this in such a vivid and clear fashion that I remained wrapped up in His living presence for a long time, humbling myself before His greatness.

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(42) J. M. J.

1411 O Divine Spirit, Spirit of truth and of light,
Dwell ever in my soul by Your divine grace.
May Your breath dissipate the darkness,
And in this light may good deeds be multiplied.

O Divine Spirit, Spirit of love and of mercy,
You pour the balm of trust into my heart,
Your grace confirms my soul in good,
Giving it the invincible power of constancy.

O Divine Spirit, Spirit of peace and of joy,
You invigorate my thirsting heart
And pour into it the living fountain of God's love,
Making it intrepid for battle.

O Divine Spirit, my soul's most welcome guest,
For my part, I want to remain faithful to You;
Both in days of joy and in the agony of suffering,
I want always, O Spirit of God, to live in Your presence.

O Divine Spirit, who pervade my whole being
And give me to know Your Divine, Triune Life,
And lead me into the mystery of Your Divine Being,
Initiating me into Your Divine Essence,

Thus united to You, I will live a life without end.

1412 **(43)** + It is with great zeal that I have prepared for the celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. I have made an extra effort to keep recollected in spirit and have meditated on that unique privilege of Our Lady. And thus my heart was completely drowned in Her, thanking God for having accorded this great privilege to Mary.

1413 I prepared not only by means of the novena said in common by the whole community, but I also made a personal effort to salute Her a thousand times each day, saying a thousand “Hail Marys” for nine days in Her praise.

+ This is now the third time I have said such a novena to the Mother of God; that is, a novena made up of a thousand Aves each day. Thus the novena consists in nine thousand salutations. Although I have done this now three times in my life, and two of these while in the course of my duties, I have never failed in carrying out my tasks with the greatest exactitude. I have always said the novena outside the time of my exercises; that is to say, I have not said the Aves during Holy Mass or Benediction. Once, I made the novena while **(44)** lying ill in the hospital. Where there’s a will, there’s a way. Apart from recreation, I have only prayed and worked. I have not said a single unnecessary word during these days. Although I must admit that such a matter requires a good deal of attention and effort, nothing is too much when it comes to honoring the Immaculate Virgin.

1414 The Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Before Holy Communion I saw the Blessed Mother inconceivably beautiful. Smiling at me She said to me, *My daughter, at God’s command I am to be, in a special and exclusive way your Mother; but I desire that you, too, in a special way, be My child.*

1415 *I desire, My dearly beloved daughter, that you practice the three virtues that are dearest to Me — and most pleasing to God. The first is humility, humility, and once again humility; the second virtue, purity; the third virtue, love of God. As My daughter, you must especially radiate with these virtues.* When the conversation ended, She pressed me to Her Heart

and disappeared. When I regained the use of my senses, (45) my heart became so wonderfully attracted to these virtues; and I practice them faithfully. They are as though engraved in my heart.

1416 This has been a great day for me. During this day I remained as though in unceasing contemplation; the very thought of this grace drew me into further contemplation; and throughout the whole day I continued in thanksgiving which I never stopped, because each recollection of this grace caused my soul, ever anew, to lose itself in God...

1417 O my Lord, my soul is the most wretched of all, and yet You stoop to it with such kindness! I see clearly Your greatness and my littleness, and therefore I rejoice that You are so powerful and without limit, and so I rejoice greatly at being so little.

1418 O suffering Christ, I am going out to meet You. As Your bride, I must resemble You. Your cloak of ignominy must cover me too. O Christ, You know how ardently I desire to become like You. Grant that Your entire Passion may be my lot. May all (46) Your sorrow be poured into my heart. I trust that You will complete this in me in the way You deem most fitting.

1419 + Today there was nocturnal adoration. I could not take part in it because of my poor health, but before I fell asleep I united myself with the sisters who were at adoration. Between four and five o'clock, I was suddenly awakened, and I heard a voice telling me to join those who were adoring at that time. I understood that there was among them a soul who was praying for me.

1420 When I steeped myself in prayer, I was transported in spirit to the chapel, where I saw the Lord Jesus, exposed in the monstrance. In place of the monstrance, I saw the glorious face of the Lord, and He said to me, **What you see in reality, these souls see through faith. Oh, how pleasing to Me is their great faith! You see, although there appears to be no trace of life in Me, in reality it is present in its fullness in each and every Host. But for Me to be able to act upon a soul, the soul must have faith. O how pleasing to Me is living faith!**

1421 Those taking part in adoration at that time (47) were Mother Superior

and a few other sisters. But I recognized that it was Mother Superior's prayer which had moved heaven, and I rejoiced that there are souls so pleasing to God.

1422 When, during recreation the next day, I asked which sisters had been at adoration between four and five o'clock, one of the sisters cried out, "Why do you ask, Sister? Perhaps you had some revelation?" I fell silent and said no more; although I was asked by Mother Superior, I could not answer because it was not a suitable moment.

1423 On a certain occasion, one of the sisters [Sister Damian Ziolk²²¹] confided to me that she wanted to choose a certain priest as her confessor. Very pleased, she shared the news with me and asked me to pray for that intention, and so I promised her to do so. During prayer, I learned that that soul would gain no spiritual profit from his direction. And then, the next time we met, she told me again of her great joy in being under his direction.

1424 I joined in her joy, but when she had **(48)** left I was severely rebuked. Jesus told me to tell her what He had given me to know during prayer, which I did at the first opportunity, although it cost me a great deal.

1425 Today, for a short while, I experienced the pain of the crown of thorns. I was praying for a certain soul before the Blessed Sacrament at the time. In an instant, I felt such a violent pain that my head dropped onto the altar rail. Although this moment was very brief, it was very painful.

1426 Christ, give me souls. Let anything You like happen to me, but give me souls in return. I want the salvation of souls. I want souls to know Your mercy. I have nothing left for myself, because I have given everything away to souls, with the result that on the day of judgment I will stand before You empty-handed, since I have given everything away to souls. Thus You will have nothing on which to judge me, and we shall meet on that day: Love and mercy...

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(49) J. M. J.

1427 Hidden Jesus, life of my soul,
Object of my ardent desire,

Nothing will stifle Your love in my heart.
The power of our mutual love assures me of that.

Hidden Jesus, glorious pledge of my resurrection,
All my life is concentrated in You.
It is You, O Host, who empower me to love forever,
And I know that You will love me as Your child in return.

Hidden Jesus, my purest love,
My life with You has begun already here on earth,
And it will become fully manifest in the eternity to come,
Because our mutual love will never change.

Hidden Jesus, sole desire of my soul,
You alone are to me more than the delights of heaven.
My soul searches for You only, who are above all gifts and graces,
You who come to me under the form of bread.

Hidden Jesus, take at last to Yourself my thirsting heart
Which burns for You with the pure fire of the Seraphim.
I go through life in Your footsteps, invincible,
With head held high, like a knight, feeble maid though I be.

1428 **(50)** For a month now, I have been feeling worse. Every time I cough, I feel my lungs disintegrating. It sometimes happens that I feel the complete decay of my own corpse. It is hard to express how great a suffering this is. Although I fully agree to this with my will, it is nevertheless a great suffering for nature, greater than wearing a hairshirt or a flagellation to the point of blood. I have felt it especially when I was going to the refectory. It took great effort for me to eat anything because food made me sick. I also started at this time to suffer from pains in my intestines. All highly seasoned dishes caused me such immense pain that I spent many nights writhing in pain and in tears, for the sake of sinners.

1429 However, I asked my confessor what to do: whether I should continue to suffer this for the sake of sinners or ask the superiors for an exception by way of milder food. He decided that I should ask the superiors for milder food. And thus I followed his directions, seeing that this humiliation was more pleasing to God.

1430 (51) One day, I began to doubt as to how it was possible to feel this continual decaying of the body and at the same time to be able to walk and work. Perhaps this was some kind of an illusion. Yet it cannot be an illusion, because it causes me such terrible pains. As I was thinking about this, one of the sisters came to converse with me. After a minute or two, she made a terribly wry face and said, "Sister, I smell a corpse here, as though it were decaying. O how dreadful it is!" I said to her, "Do not be frightened, Sister, that smell of a corpse comes from me." She was very surprised and said she could not stand it any longer. After she had gone, I understood that God had allowed her to sense this so that I would have no doubt, but that He was no less than miraculously keeping the knowledge of this suffering from the whole community. O my Jesus, only You know the full depth of this sacrifice.

1431 Nevertheless, when in the refectory I still had to bear being the object of the frequent suspicion that I was being fussy [about my food]. At such times, as always, I hasten to the Tabernacle and bow before the ciborium (52) and there draw strength to accept God's will. That which I have written is not yet everything.

1432 Today during confession, breaking the wafer with me spiritually, he gave me the following wishes: "Be as faithful as you can to the grace of God; secondly, beg God's mercy for yourself and for the whole world, because we are all in great need of God's mercy."

1433 Two days before Christmas, these words were read in the refectory: "Tomorrow is the Birth of Jesus Christ according to the flesh."²²² At these words, my soul was pierced by the light and love of God, and I gained deeper knowledge of the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. How great is the mercy of God contained in the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God!

1434 Today, the Lord gave me knowledge of His anger toward mankind which deserves to have its days shortened because of its sins. But I learned that the world's existence is maintained by chosen souls; that is, the religious orders. Woe to the world when there will be a lack of religious orders!

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(53) J. M. J.

1435 I perform each deed in the face of death.

I do it now as I would want to see it in my last hour.
Although life, like the wind, will pass swiftly by,
No deed undertaken for God will perish.

I feel the complete decay of my organism,
Although I am still living and working.
Death will be no tragedy for me,
Because I have long felt it.

Although it is very unpleasant for nature
To constantly smell one's own corpse,
Yet it is not so terrible when the soul is filled with God's light,
Because in it faith, hope, love and contrition are awakened.

Daily I make great efforts
To take part in community life,
Thereby gaining graces for souls' salvation,
Shielding them by my sacrifice from the fire of hell.

For the salvation of even a single soul
Is worth the sacrifice of a lifetime
And the bearing of the greatest sacrifices and torments,
Seeing how great the glory it gives God.

1436 (54) + Lord, although You often make known to me the thunders of
Your anger, Your anger vanishes before lowly souls. Although You are
great, Lord, You allow Yourself to be overcome by a lowly and deeply
humble soul. O humility, the most precious of virtues, how few souls
possess you! I see only a semblance of this virtue everywhere, but not the
virtue itself. Lord, reduce me to nothingness in my own eyes that I may
find grace in Yours.

1437 + Christmas Eve [1937]. After Holy Communion, the Mother of God
gave me to experience the anxious concern she had in Her heart because
of the Son of God. But this anxiety was permeated with such fragrance of
abandonment to the will of God that I should call it rather a delight than
an anxiety. I understood how my soul ought to accept the will of God in

all things. It is a pity I cannot write this the way I experienced it. My soul was plunged in deep recollection all day long. Nothing could tear me away from this recollection, neither duties, nor the business I had with lay people.

1438 **(55)** Before supper, I went into the chapel for a moment to break the wafer spiritually with those beloved persons, so dear to my heart, though far away. First, I steeped myself in profound prayer and asked the Lord for graces for them all as a group and then for each one individually. Jesus gave me to know how much this pleased Him, and my soul was filled with even greater joy to see that God loves in a special way those whom we love.

1439 + After I had gone into the refectory, during the reading, my whole being found itself plunged in God. Interiorly, I saw God looking at us with great pleasure. I remained alone with the Heavenly Father. At that moment, I had a deeper knowledge of the Three Divine Persons, whom we shall contemplate for all eternity and, after millions of years, shall discover that we have just barely begun our contemplation. Oh, how great is the mercy of God, who allows man to participate in such a high **(56)** degree in His divine happiness! At the same time, what great pain pierces my heart [at the thought] that so many souls have spurned this happiness.

1440 When we began to share the wafer, a sincere and mutual love reigned among us. Mother Superior [Irene] expressed this wish to me: “Sister, the works of God proceed slowly, so do not be in a hurry.” In general, the sisters sincerely wished me great love, which is that which I desire above all. I saw that these wishes truly came from their hearts, except for one sister, who had a concealed malice in her wishes, although this did not cause me much pain, for my soul was pervaded by God. Yet this enlightened me as to why God communicates so little with a soul of this kind, and I learned that such a soul is always seeking itself, even in holy things. Oh, how good the Lord is in not letting me go astray! I know that He will guard me, even jealously, but only as long as I remain little, because it is with such that the great Lord likes to commune. As to proud souls, He watches them from afar and opposes them.

1441 **(57)** Although I wanted to keep vigil for some time before the Midnight Mass,²²³ I could not do so. I fell asleep at once, and I was even feeling

very weak. But when they rang the bells for Midnight Mass, I jumped to my feet at once and dressed, though with great difficulty, because I felt sick again and again.

1442 + When I arrived at Midnight Mass, from the very beginning I steeped myself in deep recollection, during which time I saw the stable of Bethlehem filled with great radiance. The Blessed Virgin, all lost in the deepest of love, was wrapping Jesus in swaddling clothes, but Saint Joseph was still asleep. Only after the Mother of God put Jesus in the manger, did the light of God awaken Joseph, who was also praying. But after a while, I was left alone with the Infant Jesus who stretched out His little hands to me, and I understood that I was to take Him in my arms. Jesus pressed His head against my heart and gave me to know, by His profound gaze, how good He found it to be next to my heart. At that moment Jesus disappeared and the bell was ringing for Holy Communion.

1443 **(58)** My soul was languishing with joy. But toward the end of the Mass, I felt so weak that I had to leave the chapel and go to my cell, as I felt unable to take part in the community tea. But my joy throughout the whole Christmas Season was immense, because my soul was unceasingly united with the Lord. I have come to know that every soul would like to have divine comforts, but is by no means willing to forsake human comforts, whereas these two things cannot be reconciled.

1444 During this Christmas Season, I have sensed that certain souls have been praying for me. I rejoice that such spiritual union and knowledge exist already here on earth. O my Jesus, praise be to You for all this!

1445 In the greatest torments of soul I am always alone, but no — not alone, for I am with You, Jesus; but here I am speaking about [other] people. None of them understands my heart, but this does not surprise me anymore, whereas I used to be surprised when my intentions **(59)** were condemned and wrongly interpreted; no, this does not surprise me now at all. People do not know how to perceive the soul. They see the body, and they judge according to the body. But as distant as heaven is from earth, so distant are God's thoughts from our thoughts. I myself have experienced that quite often it happens that [...]

1446 The Lord said to me, **It should be of no concern to you how anyone else acts; you are to be My living reflection, through love and mercy.** I answered, “Lord, but they often take advantage of my goodness.” **That makes no difference, My daughter. That is no concern of yours. As for you, be always merciful toward other people, and especially toward sinners.**

1447 + **Oh, how painful it is to Me that souls so seldom unite themselves to Me in Holy Communion. I wait for souls, and they are indifferent toward Me. I love them tenderly and sincerely, and they distrust Me. I want to lavish My graces on them, and they do not want to accept them. They treat Me as a dead object, whereas (60) My Heart is full of love and mercy. In order that you may know at least some of My pain, imagine the most tender of mothers who has great love for her children, while those children spurn her love. Consider her pain. No one is in a position to console her. This is but a feeble image and likeness of My love.**

1448 **Write, speak of My mercy. Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy [the Sacrament of Reconciliation] There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated. To avail oneself of this miracle, it is not necessary to go on a great pilgrimage or to carry out some external ceremony; it suffices to come with faith to the feet of My representative and to reveal to him one’s misery, and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated. Were a soul like a decaying corpse so that from a human standpoint, there would be no [hope of] restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. Oh, how miserable are those who do not take advantage of the miracle of God’s mercy! You will call out in vain, but it will be too late.**

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(61) J. M. J.

The Year 1938

The First of January

1449 Welcome to you, New Year, in the course of which my perfection will be accomplished.²²⁴ Thank You in advance, O Lord, for everything Your

goodness will send me. Thank You for the cup of suffering from which I shall daily drink. Do not diminish its bitterness, O Lord, but strengthen my lips that, while drinking of this bitterness, they may know how to smile for love of You, my Master. I thank You for Your countless comforts and graces that flow down upon me each day like the morning dew, silently, imperceptibly, which no curious eye may notice, and which are known only to You and me, O Lord. For all this, I thank You as of today because, at the moment when You hand me the cup, my heart may not be capable of giving thanks.

1450 So today I submit myself completely and with loving consent to Your holy will, O Lord, and to Your most wise decrees, which are always full of clemency and mercy for me, though at times I can **(62)** neither understand nor fathom them. O my Master, I surrender myself completely to You, who are the rudder of my soul; steer it Yourself according to Your divine wishes. I enclose myself in Your most compassionate Heart, which is a sea of unfathomable mercy.

1451 + I am ending the old year with suffering and beginning the new one with suffering as well. Two days before the new year, I had to go to bed. I was feeling very bad, and a violent cough was weakening me. And together with this, a constant pain in my intestines and nausea had brought me to the point of exhaustion. Although I could not join in community prayer,^{[225](#)} I united myself spiritually with the whole community. When the sisters got up at eleven o'clock at night to keep vigil and welcome the New Year, I had been writhing in agony since nightfall, and this lasted until midnight. I was uniting my sufferings to the prayers of the sisters who were keeping vigil in the chapel and atoning to God for the offences of sinners.

1452 When the clock struck twelve, my soul immersed itself more deeply in recollection, and I heard a voice in my soul: **(63) Do not fear, My little child, you are not alone. Fight bravely, because My arm is supporting you; fight for the salvation of souls, exhorting them to trust in My mercy, as that is your task in this life and in the life to come.** After these words, I received a deeper understanding of divine mercy. Only that soul who wants it will be damned, for God condemns no one.

1453 Today is the Feast of the New Year. I felt so bad in the morning that I

barely managed to go to the next cell to receive Holy Communion.²²⁶ I could not go to Mass because I felt so sick, and I made my thanksgiving in bed too. I wanted so much to go to Mass and then to confession to Father Andrasz, but I felt so bad that I could go neither to Mass nor to confession. And because of this my soul suffered a good deal.

After breakfast, the Sister Infirmarian [Sister Chrysostom] came along and asked, “Sister, why didn’t you go to Mass?” I answered that I couldn’t. She shook her head disdainfully and said, “Such a great Feast Day, Sister, and you don’t even go to Mass!” and she left my cell. I had been in bed for two days, writhing in pain, and she hadn’t visited me; and when she did come, **(64)** on the third day, she did not even ask if I were able to get up, but asked irritably why I hadn’t got up for Mass. When I was alone, I tried to get up, but I was seized again with sickness, and so I stayed in bed with a calm conscience. Yet my heart had plenty to offer the Lord, joining itself spiritually to Him during the second Mass. After the second Mass, Sister Infirmarian returned to me, but this time in her capacity as infirmarian, and with a thermometer. But I had no fever, although I was seriously ill and unable to rise. So there was another sermon to tell me that I should not capitulate to illness. I answered her that I knew that here one was regarded as seriously ill only when one was in one’s last agony. However, knowing that she was about to give me a lecture, I replied that at the present time I was in no need of being incited to greater zeal. And once again, I remained alone in my cell.

My heart was crushed with sorrow, and bitterness flooded my soul, and I repeated these words: “Welcome, New Year; welcome, cup of bitterness.” My Jesus, my heart is eager for You, and yet the gravity of my illness prevents me from participating physically **(65)** in the community prayers, and I am suspected of being lazy. My sufferings are becoming greater. After dinner, Mother Superior [Irene] looked in for a moment, but she left very soon. I intended to ask to have Father Andrasz come to my cell to hear my confession, but I restrained myself from making the request for two reasons: first, not to give occasion for murmuring, as had happened above in respect to Holy Mass; and secondly, because I would not even be able to make the confession, since I felt I would burst into tears like a little child. A while later, one of the sisters came along and again reproved me: “There’s some milk with

butter in the oven, Sister; why don't you drink it?" I answered that there was no one to bring it to me.

1454 + When night fell, the physical sufferings increased and were joined by moral sufferings. Night and suffering. The solemn silence of the night made it possible for me to suffer freely. My body was stretched on the wood of the cross. I writhed in terrible pain until eleven o'clock. I went in spirit to the Tabernacle and uncovered the ciborium, leaning my head on the rim of the cup, and all my tears **(66)** flowed silently toward the Heart of Him who alone understands what pain and suffering is. And I experienced the sweetness of this suffering, and my soul came to desire this sweet agony, which I would not have exchanged for all the world's treasures. The Lord gave me strength of spirit and love towards those through whom these sufferings came. This then was the first day of the year.

1455 Also on this day I felt the prayer of a beautiful soul [probably Father Sopocko or Father Andrasz] who was praying for me and giving me, in spirit, his priestly blessing. I answered in return with my own ardent prayer.

1456 + O most gracious Lord, how merciful it is on Your part to judge each one according to his conscience and his discernment, and not according to people's talk. My spirit delights and feeds more and more on Your wisdom, which I am getting to know more and more deeply. And in this, the vastness of Your mercy becomes more and more manifest to me. O my Jesus, the effect of all this knowledge on my soul is that I am being transformed into a flame of love towards You, my God.

1457 **(67)** + January 2, 1938. As I was preparing for Holy Communion today, Jesus demanded that I should write more; not only about the graces which He grants me, but also about external matters, and this for the consolation of many souls.

1458 + After that night of suffering, when the priest [Father Matzänger²²⁷] entered my cell with the Lord Jesus, such fervor filled my whole being that I felt that if the priest had tarried a little longer, Jesus himself would have leaped out of his hand and come to me.

1459 After Holy Communion the Lord said to me, **If the priest had not brought Me to you, I would have come Myself under the same species. My daughter, your sufferings of this night obtained the grace of mercy for an immense number of souls.**

1460 + **My daughter, I have something to tell you.** I replied, “Speak, Jesus, for I thirst for Your words.” **It displeases Me that, because the sisters were murmuring, you did not ask to have Father Andrasz hear your confession in your cell. Know that, because of this, you gave them even greater cause for murmuring. (68)** Very humbly I begged the Lord’s forgiveness. O my Master, rebuke me; do not overlook my faults, and do not let me err.

1461 + O my Jesus, when I am misunderstood and my soul is in anguish, I want to stay a while alone with You. The words of mortals give me no comfort. Do not send me, O Lord, such messengers as speak only for themselves and say what their own nature dictates to them. Such consolers make me very tired.

1462 January 6, 1938. Today, when the chaplain [Father Theodore] brought the Lord Jesus, a light issued from the Host, its light striking my heart and filling me with a great fire of love. Jesus was letting me know that I should answer the inspirations of grace with more faithfulness, and that my vigilance should be more subtle.

1463 + The Lord also gave me to know that many bishops were considering the question of this Feast, as well as a certain lay person. Some were enthusiastic about this work of God, while others regarded it with disbelief; but in spite of everything, the result was great glory for the **(69)** work of God. Mother Irene and Mother Mary Joseph were giving some kind of a report to these dignitaries, but they were being questioned, not so much about the work, as about myself.²²⁸ As regards the work itself, there was no doubt, since the glory of God was already being proclaimed.

1464 I feel much better today. I was glad I would be able to meditate more during the Holy Hour. Then I heard a voice: **You will not be in good health. Do not put off the Sacrament of Penance, because this displeases Me. Pay little attention to the murmurs of those around you.** This surprised me, because I am feeling better today, but I gave it no

more thought. When the sister switched off the light, I began the Holy Hour. But after a while something went wrong with my heart. I suffered in silence until eleven o'clock, but then I began to feel so bad that I woke up Sister N. [probably Sister Fabiola], who is my roommate, and she gave me some drops, which brought me a little relief so that I could lie down. I now understand the Lord's warning. I decided to call any priest at all, the next day, and to open **(70)** the secrets of my soul to him. But that was not all, for while I was praying for sinners and offering all my sufferings for them, the Evil Spirit could not stand that.

1465 Taking the form of an apparition he said, "Do not pray for sinners, but for yourself, for you will be damned." Paying no attention to Satan, I continued to pray with redoubled fervor for sinners. The Evil Spirit howled with fury, "Oh, if I had power over you!" and disappeared. I saw that my suffering and prayer shackled Satan and snatched many souls from his clutches.

1466 Jesus, lover of human salvation, draw all souls to the divine life. May the greatness of Your mercy be praised here on earth and in eternity. O great lover of souls, who in Your boundless compassion opened the salutary fountains of mercy so that weak souls may be fortified in this life's pilgrimage, Your mercy runs through our life like a golden thread and maintains in good order the contact of our being with God. For He does not need anything to make Him happy; so everything is **(71)** solely the work of His mercy. My senses are transfixed with joy when God grants me a deeper awareness of that great attribute of His; namely, His unfathomable mercy.

1467 January 7, 1938. First Friday of the month. This morning during Mass, for a brief while, I saw the suffering Savior. What struck me was that Jesus was so peaceful amidst His great sufferings. I understood that this was a lesson for me on what my outward behavior should be in the midst of my various sufferings.

1468 For quite a long while, I felt pain in my hands, feet and side. Then I saw a certain sinner who, profiting from my sufferings, drew near to the Lord. All this for starving souls that they may not die of starvation.

1469 + I went to confession to the chaplain [Father Theodore] today. Jesus

comforted me through this priest. O my Mother, Church of God, you are a true Mother who understands her children...

1470 **(72)** Oh, how good it is that Jesus will judge us according to our conscience and not according to people's talk and judgments. O inconceivable goodness, I see You full of goodness in the very act of judgment.

1471 Although I am feeling weak, and my nature is clamoring for rest, I feel the inspiration of grace telling me to take hold of myself and write, write for the comfort of souls, whom I love so much and with whom I will share all eternity. And I desire eternal life for them so ardently that that is why I use all my free moments, no matter how short, for writing in the way that Jesus wishes of me.

1472 January 8. During Holy Mass, I had a moment of knowledge concerning Father S., that great glory is being given to God through our mutual efforts. And even though we are far from each other, we are often together, because we are united by a common goal.

1473 O my Jesus, my only desire, although I wanted to receive You today with greater fervor than ever, **(73)** nevertheless, precisely on this day, my soul is drier than ever. My faith grows in power, and so the fruit of Your coming, Lord, will be abundant. Although many a time You come without touching my senses and reign only in the loftier part of me, the senses too sometimes rejoice at Your coming.

1474 I often ask the Lord Jesus for an intellect enlightened by faith. I express this to the Lord in these words: "Jesus, give me an intellect, a great intellect, for this only, that I may understand You better; because the better I get to know You, the more ardently will I love You. Jesus, I ask You for a powerful intellect, that I may understand divine and lofty matters. Jesus, give me a keen intellect with which I will get to know Your Divine Essence and Your indwelling, Triune life. Give my intellect these capacities and aptitudes by means of Your special grace. Although I know that there is a capability through grace which the Church gives me, there is still a treasure of graces which You give us, O Lord, when we ask You for them. But if my request is not pleasing to You, then I beg You, do not give me the inclination to pray thus."

1475 (74) I strive for the greatest perfection possible in order to be useful to the Church. Greater by far is my bond to the Church. The sanctity or the fall of each individual soul has an effect upon the whole Church. Observing myself and those who are close to me, I have come to understand how great an influence I have on other souls, not by any heroic deeds, as these are striking in themselves, but by small actions like a movement of the hand, a look, and many other things too numerous to mention, which have an effect on and reflect in the souls of others, as I myself have noticed.

1476 Oh, how good it is that our rule demands strict silence in the dormitory [common bedrooms] and does not allow us to stay in them unless it is absolutely necessary. I have at present a little room in which two of us sleep, but at the time of my sickness when I had to stay in bed, I found out how bothersome it was if someone was sitting in the bedroom all the time. Sister N.²²⁹ had some handwork to do and sat in the bedroom almost all of the time, (75) and another S.²³⁰ would come to instruct her on how to do it. It's difficult to describe how much this tires one, especially when one is ill and has spent a night in pain. Every word has a repercussion somewhere in the brain, especially when the eyes are heavy with sleep. O rule, how much love there is in you...

1477 When, during Vespers, the Magnificat was being sung and they came to the words, "He has shown the strength of His arm," a profound spirit of recollection enveloped my soul, and I understood that the Lord would soon accomplish His work in My soul.²³¹ I am not surprised now that the Lord did not disclose everything to me at first.

1478 + Why are You sad today, Jesus? Tell me, who is the cause of Your sadness? And Jesus answered me, **Chosen souls who do not have My spirit, who live according to the letter [cf. 2 Cor. 3:6] and have placed the letter above My spirit, above the spirit of love.**

I have founded My whole law on love, and yet I do not see love, even in religious orders. This is why sadness fills My Heart.

+

(76) J. M. J.

1479 O my Jesus, in terrible bitterness and pain,
I yet feel the caress of Your Divine Heart.
Like a good mother, You press me to Your bosom,
And even now You give me to experience what the veil hides.

O my Jesus, in this wilderness and terror which surround me,
My heart still feels the warmth of Your gaze,
Which no storm can blot out from me,
As You give me the assurance of Your great love, O God.

O my Jesus, midst the great miseries of this life,
You shine like a star, O Jesus, protecting me from shipwreck.
And though my miseries be great,
I have great trust in the power of Your mercy.

O hidden Jesus, in the many struggles of my last hour,
May the omnipotence of Your grace be poured out upon my soul,
That at death's moment I may gaze upon You
And see You face to face, as do the chosen in heaven.

O my Jesus, midst the dangers which surround me,
I go through life with a cry of joy, my head raised proudly,
Because against Your Heart so filled with love, O Jesus,
All enemies will be crushed, all darkness dispelled.

1480 (77) + Jesus, hide me in Your mercy and shield me against everything
that might terrify my soul. Do not let my trust in Your mercy be
disappointed. Shield me with the omnipotence of Your mercy, and judge
me leniently as well.

1481 Today²³² during Holy Mass, I saw the Infant Jesus near my kneeler. He
appeared to be about one year old, and He asked me to take Him in my
arms. When I did take Him in my arms, He cuddled up close to my
bosom and said, **It is good for Me to be close to your heart.** "Although
You are so little, I know that You are God. Why do You take the
appearance of such a little baby to commune with me?" **Because I want
to teach you spiritual childhood. I want you to be very little, because
when you are little, I carry you close to My Heart, just as you are
holding Me close to your heart right now.** And with that, I was again

alone, but no one can conceive the emotions of my soul, I was so fully plunged in God, like a sponge thrown into the sea...

1482 **(78)** + O my Jesus, You know that I have gotten myself into a lot of trouble for speaking out the truth. O truth, so often oppressed, you nearly always wear a crown of thorns! O Eternal Truth, support me that I may have the courage to speak the truth even if it would come about that I would pay for it with my life. O Jesus, how hard it is to believe in this, when one sees one thing taught and something else lived.

1483 This is why, during the retreat, after a long observation of life, I resolved to fix my eyes firmly on You, Jesus, the most perfect of models. O eternity, which will uncover many secrets and make manifest the truth...

1484 O Living Host, support me in this exile, that I may be empowered to walk faithfully in the footsteps of the Savior. I do not ask, Lord, that You take me down from the cross, but I implore You to give me the strength to remain steadfast upon it. I want to be stretched out upon the cross as You were, Jesus. I want all the tortures and pains that You suffered. I want to drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs.

(79) The Goodness of God.

1485 The mercy of God, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, the voice of the Lord who speaks to us from the throne of mercy: **Come to Me, all of you.**

Conversation of the Merciful God
with a Sinful Soul.

Jesus: **Be not afraid of your Savior, O sinful soul. I make the first move to come to you, for I know that by yourself you are unable to lift yourself to me. Child, do not run away from your Father; be willing to talk openly with your God of mercy who wants to speak words of pardon and lavish his graces on you. How dear your soul is to Me! I have inscribed your name upon My hand; you are engraved as a deep wound in My Heart.**

Soul: Lord, I hear your voice calling me to turn back from the path of sin,

but I have neither the strength nor the courage to do so.

Jesus: I am your strength, I will help you in the struggle.

Soul: Lord, I recognize your holiness, and I fear You.

Jesus: My child, do you fear the God of mercy? My holiness (80) does not prevent Me from being merciful. Behold, for you I have established a throne of mercy on earth — the tabernacle — and from this throne I desire to enter into your heart. I am not surrounded by a retinue or guards. You can come to me at any moment, at any time; I want to speak to you and desire to grant you grace.

Soul: Lord, I doubt that You will pardon my numerous sins; my misery fills me with fright.

Jesus: My mercy is greater than your sins and those of the entire world. Who can measure the extent of my goodness? For you I descended from heaven to earth; for you I allowed myself to be nailed to the cross; for you I let my Sacred Heart be pierced with a lance, thus opening wide the source of mercy for you. Come, then, with trust to draw graces from this fountain. I never reject a contrite heart. Your misery has disappeared in the depths of My mercy. Do not argue with Me about your wretchedness. You will give me pleasure if you hand over to me all your troubles and griefs. I shall heap upon you the treasures of My grace.

(81) Soul: You have conquered, O Lord, my stony heart with Your goodness. In trust and humility I approach the tribunal of Your mercy, where You Yourself absolve me by the hand of your representative. O Lord, I feel Your grace and Your peace filling my poor soul. I feel overwhelmed by Your mercy, O Lord. You forgive me, which is more than I dared to hope for or could imagine. Your goodness surpasses all my desires. And now, filled with gratitude for so many graces, I invite You to my heart. I wandered, like a prodigal child gone astray; but you did not cease to be my Father. Increase Your mercy toward me, for You see how weak I am.

Jesus: Child, speak no more of your misery; it is already forgotten. Listen, My child, to what I desire to tell you. Come close to My

wounds and draw from the Fountain of Life whatever your heart desires. Drink copiously from the Fountain of Life and you will not weary on your journey. Look at the splendors of My mercy and do not fear the enemies of your salvation. Glorify My mercy.

(82) Conversation of the Merciful God
with a Despairing Soul.

1486 Jesus: **O soul steeped in darkness, do not despair. All is not yet lost. Come and confide in your God, who is love and mercy.**

— But the soul, deaf even to this appeal, wraps itself in darkness.

Jesus calls out again: **My child, listen to the voice of your merciful Father.**

— In the soul arises this reply: “For me there is no mercy,” and it falls into greater darkness, a despair which is a foretaste of hell and makes it unable to draw near to God.

Jesus calls to the soul a third time, but the soul remains deaf and blind, hardened and despairing. Then the mercy of God begins to exert itself, and, without any co-operation from the soul, God grants it final grace. If this too is spurned, God will leave the soul in this self-chosen disposition for eternity. This grace emerges from the merciful Heart of Jesus and gives the soul a special light by means of which the soul begins to understand (83) God’s effort; but conversion depends on its own will. The soul knows that this, for her, is final grace and, should it show even a flicker of good will, the mercy of God will accomplish the rest.

My omnipotent mercy is active here. Happy the soul that takes advantage of this grace.

Jesus: **What joy fills My Heart when you return to Me. Because you are weak, I take you in My arms and carry you to the home of My Father.**

Soul (as if awaking, asks fearfully): Is it possible that there yet is mercy for me?

Jesus: **There is, My child. You have a special claim on My mercy. Let**

it act in your poor soul; let the rays of grace enter your soul; they bring with them light, warmth, and life.

Soul: But fear fills me at the thought of my sins, and this terrible fear moves me to doubt Your goodness.

Jesus: **My child, all your sins have not wounded My Heart as painfully as your present lack of trust does — that after so many efforts of My (84) love and mercy, you should still doubt My goodness.**

Soul: O Lord, save me Yourself, for I perish. Be my Savior. O Lord, I am unable to say anything more; my pitiful heart is torn asunder; but You, O Lord...

Jesus does not let the soul finish but, raising it from the ground, from the depths of its misery, he leads it into the recesses of His Heart where all its sins disappear instantly, consumed by the flames of love.

Jesus: **Here, soul, are all the treasures of My Heart. Take everything you need from it.**

Soul: O Lord, I am inundated with Your grace. I sense that a new life has entered into me and, above all, I feel Your love in my heart. That is enough for me. O Lord, I will glorify the omnipotence of Your mercy for all eternity. Encouraged by Your goodness, I will confide to You all the sorrows of my heart.

Jesus: **Tell me all, My child, hide nothing from Me, because My loving Heart, the Heart of your Best Friend, is listening to you.**

Soul: O Lord, now I see all my ingratitude and Your goodness. You were pursuing me with Your grace, while I was frustrating Your benevolence. I see that I deserve (85) the depths of hell for spurning Your graces.

Jesus (interrupting): **Do not be absorbed in your misery — you are still too weak to speak of it — but, rather, gaze on My Heart filled with goodness, and be imbued with My sentiments. Strive for meekness and humility; be merciful to others, as I am to you; and, when you feel your strength failing, if you come to the fountain of mercy to**

fortify your soul, you will not grow weary on your journey.

Soul: Now I understand Your mercy, which protects me, and like a brilliant star, leads me into the home of my Father, protecting me from the horrors of hell that I have deserved, not once, but a thousand times. O Lord, eternity will hardly suffice for me to give due praise to Your unfathomable mercy and Your compassion for me.

+ Conversation of the Merciful God
with a Suffering Soul

1487 Jesus: **Poor soul, I see that you suffer much and that you do not have even the strength to converse with me. So I will speak to you. Even though your sufferings were (86) very great, do not lose heart or give in to despondency. But tell Me, my child, who has dared to wound your heart? Tell me about everything, be sincere in dealing with Me, reveal all the wounds of your heart. I will heal them, and your suffering will become a source of your sanctification.**

Soul: Lord, my sufferings are so great and numerous and have lasted so long that I become discouraged.

Jesus: **My child, do not be discouraged. I know your boundless trust in Me; I know you are aware of My goodness and mercy. Let us talk in detail about everything that weighs so heavily upon your heart.**

Soul: There are so many different things that I do not know what to speak about first, nor how to express it.

Jesus: **Talk to Me simply, as a friend to a friend. Tell Me now, My child, what hinders you from advancing in holiness?**

Soul: Poor health detains me on the way to holiness. I cannot fulfill my duties. I am as useless as an extra wheel on a wagon. I cannot mortify myself or fast to any extent, as the saints did. **(87)** Furthermore, nobody believes I am sick, so that mental pain is added to those of the body, and I am often humiliated. Jesus, how can anyone become holy in such circumstances?

Jesus: **True, My child, all that is painful. But there is no way to heaven except the way of the cross. I followed it first. You must learn**

that it is the shortest and surest way.

Soul: Lord, there is another obstacle on the road to holiness. Because I am faithful to You, I am persecuted and suffer much.

Jesus: It is because you are not of this world that the world hates you. First it persecuted Me. Persecution is a sign that you are following in My footsteps faithfully.

Soul: My Lord, I am also discouraged because neither my superiors nor my confessor understand my interior trials. A darkness clouds my mind. How can I advance? All this discourages me from striving for the heights of sanctity.

Jesus: Well, My child, this time you have told Me a good deal. I realize how painful it is not to be (88) understood, and especially by those whom one loves and with whom one has been very open. But suffice it to know that I understand all your troubles and misery. I am pleased by the deep faith you have, despite everything, in My representatives. Learn from this that no one will understand a soul entirely — that is beyond human ability. Therefore, I have remained on earth to comfort your aching heart and to fortify your soul, so that you will not falter on the way. You say that a dense darkness is obscuring your mind. But why, at such times, do you not come to Me, the light who can in an instant pour into your soul more understanding about holiness than can be found in any books? No confessor is capable of teaching and enlightening a soul in this way.

Know, too, that the darkness about which you complain I first endured in the Garden of Olives when My Soul was crushed in mortal anguish. I am giving you a share in those sufferings because of My special love for you and in view of the high degree of holiness I am (89) intending for you in heaven. A suffering soul is closest to My Heart.

Soul: One more thing, Lord. What should I do when I am ignored and rejected by people, especially by those on whom I had a right to count in times of greatest need?

Jesus: My child, make the resolution never to rely on people. Entrust

yourself completely to My will saying, “Not as I want, but according to Your will, O God, let it be done unto me.” These words, spoken from the depths of one’s heart, can raise a soul to the summit of sanctity in a short time. In such a soul I delight. Such a soul gives Me glory. Such a soul fills heaven with the fragrance of her virtue. But understand that the strength by which you bear sufferings comes from frequent Communions. So approach this fountain of mercy often, to draw with the vessel of trust whatever you need.

Soul: Thank You, Lord, for Your goodness in remaining with us in this exile as the God of mercy **(90)** and blessing us with the radiance of Your compassion and goodness. It is through the light of Your mercy that I have come to understand how much You love me.

1488

Conversation of the Merciful God
with a Soul Striving after Perfection.

Jesus: I am pleased with your efforts, O soul aspiring for perfection, but why do I see you so often sad and depressed? Tell Me, My child, what is the meaning of this sadness, and what is its cause?

Soul: Lord, the reason for my sadness is that, in spite of my sincere resolutions, I fall again into the same faults. I make resolutions in the morning, but in the evening I see how much I have departed from them.

Jesus: You see, My child, what you are of yourself. The cause of your falls is that you rely too much upon yourself and too little on Me. But let this not sadden you so much. You are dealing with the God of mercy, which your misery cannot exhaust. Remember, I did not allot only a certain number of pardons.

Soul: Yes, I know all that, **(91)** but great temptations assail me, and various doubts awaken within me and, moreover, everything irritates and discourages me.

Jesus: My child, know that the greatest obstacles to holiness are discouragement and an exaggerated anxiety. These will deprive you of the ability to practice virtue. All temptations united together ought

not disturb your interior peace, not even momentarily. Sensitiveness and discouragement are the fruits of self-love. You should not become discouraged, but strive to make My love reign in place of your self-love. Have confidence, My child. Do not lose heart in coming for pardon, for I am always ready to forgive you. As often as you beg for it, you glorify My mercy.

Soul: I understand what is the better thing to do, what pleases You more, but I encounter great obstacles in acting on this understanding.

Jesus: My child, life on earth is a struggle indeed; a great struggle for My kingdom. But fear not, because you are not alone. I am always supporting you, (92) so lean on Me as you struggle, fearing nothing. Take the vessel of trust and draw from the fountain of life — for yourself, but also for other souls, especially such as are distrustful of My goodness.

Soul: O Lord, I feel my heart being filled with Your love and the rays of Your mercy and love piercing my soul. I go, Lord, at Your command. I go to conquer souls. Sustained by Your grace, I am ready to follow You, Lord, not only to Tabor, but also to Calvary. I desire to lead souls to the fount of Your mercy so that the splendor of Your mercy may be reflected in all souls, and the home of our Father be filled to overflowing. And when the enemy begins to attack me, I shall take refuge behind the shield of Your mercy.

1489

Conversation of the Merciful God
with a Perfect Soul.

Soul: My Lord and Master, I desire to converse with You.

Jesus: Speak, My beloved (93) child, for I am always listening. I wait for you. What do you desire to say?

Soul: Lord, first let me pour out my heart at Your feet in a fragrant anointing of gratitude for the many blessings which You lavish upon me; even if I wanted to, I could not count them. I only recall that there has never been a moment in my life in which I have not experienced Your

protection and goodness.

Jesus: Your words please Me, and your thanksgiving opens up new treasures of graces. But, My child, we should talk in more detail about the things that lie in your heart. Let us talk confidentially and frankly, as two hearts that love one another do.

Soul: O my merciful Lord, there are secrets in my heart which no one knows or will ever know except You because, even if I wanted to reveal them, no one would understand me. Your minister knows some because I confess to him, but he knows only the bit of these mysteries that I am capable of revealing; the rest remains between us for eternity, O My Lord! **(94)** You have covered me with the cloak of Your mercy, pardoning my sins. Not once did You refuse Your pardon; You always had pity on me, giving me a new life of grace. To prevent doubts, You have entrusted me to the loving care of Your Church, that tender mother, who in Your Name assures me of the truths of faith and watches lest I wander. Especially in the tribunal of Your mercy does my soul meet an ocean of favors, though You did not give the Fallen Angels time to repent or prolong their time of mercy. O my Lord, you have provided saintly priests to show me the sure way.

Jesus, there is one more secret in my life, the deepest and dearest to my heart: it is You Yourself when You come to my heart under the appearance of bread. Herein lies the whole secret of my sanctity. Here my heart is so united with Yours as to be but one. There are no more secrets, because all that is Yours is mine, and all that is mine is Yours. Such is the omnipotence and the **(95)** miracle of Your mercy. All the tongues of men and of angels united could not find words adequate to this mystery of Your love and mercy.

When I contemplate this mystery, my heart falls into a new ecstasy. In silence I tell You everything, Lord, because the language of love is without words; not a single stirring of my heart escapes You. O Lord, the extent of Your great condescension has awakened in my soul an even greater love for You, the sole object of my love. The life of union manifests itself in perfect purity, deep humility, gentle silence, and great zeal for the salvation of souls.

O my sweetest Lord, You watch over me each moment and inspire me as to how I should act in a precise situation, when my heart wavers between two things. You Yourself frequently intervened in the resolution of a difficulty. Countless times, by means of a sudden (96) enlightenment, You have given me to know what is the more pleasing to You.

Oh, how numerous are the instances of forgiveness about which no one knows! How often You have poured into my soul courage and perseverance to go forward. It is You Yourself who removed obstacles from my road, intervening directly in the actions of people. O Jesus, everything I have said to You is but a pale shadow of what is taking place in my heart. O my Jesus, how ardently I desire the conversion of sinners! You know what I am doing for them to win them for You. Every offense against You wounds me deeply. I spare neither strength, nor health, nor life itself in defense of Your kingdom. Although my efforts may remain invisible on earth, they are no less valuable in Your eyes.

O Jesus, I want to bring souls to the fount of Your mercy to draw the reviving water of life with the vessel of trust. The soul desirous of more of God's mercy should approach God with greater trust; and if her trust in God is unlimited, then the mercy of God toward it will be likewise limitless. O my God, (97) You know every beat of my heart, You know how eagerly I desire that all hearts would beat for You alone, that every soul glorify the greatness of Your mercy.

Jesus: My beloved child, delight of My Heart, your words are dearer and more pleasing to me than the angelic chorus. All the treasures of My Heart are open to you. Take from this Heart all that you need for yourself and for the whole world. For the sake of your love, I withhold the just chastisements, which mankind has deserved. A single act of pure love pleases Me more than a thousand imperfect prayers. One of your sighs of love atones for many offenses with which the godless overwhelm Me. The smallest act of virtue has unlimited value in My eyes because of your great love for Me. In a soul that lives on My love alone, I reign as in heaven. I watch over it day and night. In it I find My happiness; My ear is attentive to (98) each request of its heart; often I anticipate its requests. O child, especially beloved by Me, apple of My eye, rest a moment near My

Heart and taste of the love in which you will delight for all eternity.

But child, you are not yet in your homeland; so go, fortified by My grace, and fight for My kingdom in human souls; fight as a king's child would; and remember that the days of your exile will pass quickly, and with them the possibility of earning merit for heaven. I expect from you, My child, a great number of souls who will glorify My mercy for all eternity. My child, that you may answer My call worthily, receive Me daily in Holy Communion. It will give you strength...

(99) Jesus, do not leave me alone in suffering. You know, Lord, how weak I am. I am an abyss of wretchedness, I am nothingness itself; so what will be so strange if You leave me alone and I fall? I am an infant, Lord, so I cannot get along by myself. However, beyond all abandonment I trust, and in spite of my own feeling I trust, and I am being completely transformed into trust — often in spite of what I feel. Do not lessen any of my sufferings, only give me strength to bear them. Do with me as You please, Lord, only give me the grace to be able to love You in every event and circumstance. Lord, do not lessen my cup of bitterness, only give me strength that I may be able to drink it all.

O Lord, sometimes You lift me up to the brightness of visions, and then again You plunge me into the darkness of night and the abyss of my nothingness, and my soul feels as if it were alone in the wilderness. Yet, above all things, I trust in You, Jesus, for You are unchangeable. My moods change, but You are always the same, full of mercy.

1490 **(100)** + Jesus, source of life, sanctify me. O my strength, fortify me. My Commander, fight for me. Only light of my soul, enlighten me. My Master, guide me. I entrust myself to You as a little child does to its mother's love. Even if all things were to conspire against me, and even if the ground were to give way under my feet, I would be at peace close to Your Heart. You are always a most tender mother to me, and You surpass all mothers. I will sing of my pain to You by my silence, and You will understand me beyond any utterance...

1491 + The Lord visited me today and said, **My daughter, do not be afraid of what will happen to you. I will give you nothing beyond your**

strength. You know the power of My grace; let that be enough. After these words, the Lord gave me a deeper understanding of the action of His grace.

1492 Before Holy Communion, Jesus gave me to understand that I should pay absolutely no attention **(101)** to what a certain sister would say, because her cunning and malice were displeasing to Him. **My daughter, do not speak to this person about either your views or your opinions.** I begged the Lord's pardon for what in that soul was displeasing to Him, and I begged Him to strengthen me with His grace when she would come to talk with me again. She has asked me about many things, to which I gave answer with all my sisterly love and, as evidence that I have spoken to her from the bottom of my heart, I have told her some things that came from my own experience. But her intentions were something quite different from the words on her lips...

1493 + O my Jesus, from the moment I gave myself completely to You, I have given no thought whatsoever for myself. You may do with me whatever You like. There is only one thing I think about; that is, what do You prefer; what can I do, O Lord, to please You. I listen and watch for each opportunity. It matters not if I am outwardly judged otherwise in this matter...

1494 **(102)** January 15, 1938. Today, when the sister about whom the Lord warned me came to see me, I armed myself spiritually for battle. Although it cost me much, I did not depart one bit from what the Lord had commanded. But when an hour had gone by, and the sister made no move to go, I interiorly called upon Jesus to help. Then I heard a voice in my soul saying, **Do not fear. I am watching you this very moment and am helping you. In a moment, I will send you two sisters who are coming to visit you, and then you will find it easy to continue the conversation.** And at that moment two sisters entered, and then the conversation was much easier, even though it lasted for still another half hour.

1495 Oh, how good it is to call on Jesus for help during a conversation. Oh, how good it is, during a moment of peace, to beg for actual graces. I fear most of all this sort of confidential conversation; there is need of much divine light at times like this, in order to speak with profit, both for the

other person's soul, and for one's own as well. God, however, comes to our aid; but we have to ask Him for it. Let no one trust too much in his own self.

1496 **(103)** January 17, 1938. Today, since early in the morning, my soul has been in darkness. I cannot ascend to Jesus, and I feel as though I have been forsaken by Him. I will not turn to creatures for light, because I know that they will not enlighten me if Jesus wills to keep me in darkness. I submit myself to His holy will and suffer. Still, the struggle is becoming more and more desperate. During Vespers, I wanted to unite myself with the sisters through prayer.

1497 When I went, in my thoughts, to the chapel, my spirit was plunged into even greater darkness. Total dis-couragement came over me. Then I heard Satan's voice: "See how contradictory everything is that Jesus gives to you: He tells you to found a convent, and then He gives you sickness; He tells you to set about establishing this Feast of Mercy while the whole world does not at all want such a feast. Why do you pray for this feast? It is so inopportune." My soul remained silent and, by an act of will, continued to pray without entering into conversation with the Spirit of Darkness. Nevertheless, such an extraordinary disgust with life came over me that I had to make a great act of the will to consent to go on living... **(104)**

And again I heard the tempter's words: "Ask for death for yourself, tomorrow after Holy Communion. God will hear you, for He has heard you so many times before and has given you that which you asked of Him." I remained silent and, by an act of will, I began to pray, or rather, submitted myself to God, asking Him interiorly not to abandon me at this moment. It was already eleven o'clock at night, and there was silence all around. The sisters were all asleep in their cells, and my soul alone was struggling with great exertion.

The tempter went on: "Why should you bother about other souls? You ought to be praying only for yourself. As for sinners, they will be converted without your prayers. I see that you are suffering very much at this moment. I'm going to give you a piece of advice on which your happiness will depend: Never speak about God's mercy and, in particular, do not encourage sinners to trust in God's mercy, because they deserve a

just punishment. Another very important thing: Do not tell your confessors, and especially this extraordinary confessor and the priest in Vilnius, about what goes on in your soul. I know them; I know who they are, and so I want to put you on your guard **(105)** against them. You see, to live as a good nun, it is sufficient to live like all the others. Why expose yourself to so many difficulties?”

1498 I remained silent, and by an act of will I dwelt in God, although a moan escaped from my heart. Finally, the tempter went away and I, exhausted, fell asleep immediately. In the morning, right after receiving Holy Communion, I went immediately to my cell and falling on my knees I renewed my act of submission in all things to the will of God. “Jesus, I ask You, give me the strength for battle. Let it be done to me according to Your most holy will. My soul is enamored of Your most holy will.”

1499 At that moment, I saw Jesus, who said, **I am pleased with what you are doing. And you can continue to be at peace if you always do the best you can in respect to this work of mercy. Be absolutely as frank as possible with your confessor.**

Satan gained nothing by tempting you, because you did not enter into conversation with him. Continue to act in this way. You gave Me great glory today by fighting so faithfully. (106) Let it be confirmed and engraved on your heart that I am always with you, even if you don't feel My presence at the time of battle.

1500 Today, the love of God is transporting me into the other world. I am all immersed in love; I love and feel that I am loved, and with full consciousness I experience this. My soul is drowning in the Lord, realizing the great Majesty of God and its own littleness; but through this knowledge my happiness increases... This awareness is so vivid in the soul, so powerful and, at the same time, so sweet.

1501 + Now that I have difficulty sleeping at night, because my suffering won't allow it, I visit all the churches and chapels and, if only for a brief moment, I make an act of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. When I return to my chapel, I then pray for certain priests who proclaim and glorify The Divine Mercy. I also pray for the intentions of the Holy Father and to obtain mercy for sinners — such are my nights.

1502 **(107)** January 20, 1938. I never cringe before anyone. I can't bear flattery, for humility is nothing but the truth. There is no cringing in true humility. Although I consider myself the least in the whole convent, on the other hand, I enjoy the honor of being the bride of Christ. Little matter that often I hear people say that I am proud, for I know that human judgment does not discern the motives for our actions.

1503 When, at the beginning of my religious life, following the novitiate, I began to exercise myself particularly in humility, the humiliations that God sent me were not enough for me. And so, in my excessive zeal, I looked for more of them on my own, and I often represented myself to my superiors other than I was in reality and spoke of miseries of which I had no notion. But a short time later, Jesus gave me to know that humility is only the truth. From that time on, I changed my ideas, faithfully following the light of Jesus. I learned that if a soul is with Jesus, He will not permit it to err.

1504 **(108)** + Lord, You know that since my youth I have always sought Your will and, recognizing it, have always tried to carry it out. My heart has been accustomed to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, to whom I am faithful. In the midst of the greatest din I have heard the voice of God. I always know what is going on in my interior...

1505 I am striving for sanctity, because in this way I shall be useful to the Church. I make constant efforts in practicing virtue. I try faithfully to follow Jesus. And I deposit this whole series of daily virtues—silent, hidden, almost imperceptible, but made with great love—in the treasury of God's Church for the common benefit of souls. I feel interiorly as if I were responsible for all souls. I know very well that I do not live for myself alone, but for the entire Church...

1506 + O incomprehensible God, my heart dissolves in joy that You have allowed me to penetrate the mysteries of Your mercy! **(109)** Everything begins with Your mercy and ends with Your mercy.

1507 All grace flows from mercy, and the last hour abounds with mercy for us. Let no one doubt concerning the goodness of God; even if a person's sins were as dark as night, God's mercy is stronger than our misery. One thing alone is necessary: that the sinner set ajar the door of his heart, be it

ever so little, to let in a ray of God's merciful grace, and then God will do the rest. But poor is the soul who has shut the door on God's mercy, even at the last hour. It was just such souls who plunged Jesus into deadly sorrow in the Garden of Olives; indeed, it was from His Most Merciful Heart that divine mercy flowed out.

1508 January 21, [1938]. Jesus, how truly dreadful it would be to suffer if it were not for You. But it is You, Jesus, stretched out on the cross, who give me strength and are always close to the suffering soul. Creatures will abandon a person in his suffering, but You, O Lord, are faithful ...

1509 **(110)** It often happens when one is ill, as in the case of Job in the Old Testament, that as long as one can move about and work, everything is fine and dandy; but when God sends illness, somehow or other, there are fewer friends about. But yet, there are some. They still take interest in our suffering and all that, but if God sends a longer illness, even those faithful friends slowly begin to desert us. They visit us less frequently, and often their visits cause suffering. Instead of comforting us, they reproach us about certain things, which is an occasion of a good deal of suffering. And so the soul, like Job, is alone; but fortunately, it is not alone, because Jesus-Host is with it.

After having tasted the above sufferings and spent a whole night in bitterness, the next morning, when the chaplain [Father Theodore] brought me Holy Communion, I had to control myself by sheer effort of will to keep from crying out at the top of my voice, "Welcome, my true and only Friend." Holy Communion gives me strength to suffer and fight.

I wish to speak of one more thing that I have experienced: when God gives **(111)** neither death nor health, and [when] this lasts for many years, people become accustomed to this and consider the person as not being ill. Then there begins a whole series of silent sufferings. Only God knows how many sacrifices the soul makes.

1510 One evening, when I was feeling so bad that I wondered how I would get back to my cell, I came across the Sister Assistant [Sister Seraphina], who was asking one of the sisters of the first choir to go to the gate with a certain message. But when she saw me, she said to her, "No, Sister, you need not go, but Sister Faustina will, because it is raining heavily." I

answered, “All right,” and went and carried out the order, but only God knows the whole of it. This is just one example among many. Sometimes it would seem that a sister of the second choir²³³ is made of stone, but she also is human and has a heart and feelings...

1511 At such times, God Himself comes to our rescue, for otherwise the soul would not be able to bear these crosses of which I haven’t even begun to write, nor do I intend to do so now. But when I feel the inspiration to do so, I will write about them...

1512 **(112)** Today, during Mass, I saw the Lord Jesus in the midst of His sufferings, as though dying on the cross. He said to me, **My daughter, meditate frequently on the sufferings which I have undergone for your sake, and then nothing of what you suffer for Me will seem great to you. You please Me most when you meditate on My Sorrowful Passion. Join your little sufferings to My Sorrowful Passion, so that they may have infinite value before My Majesty.**

1513 + Jesus said to me today, **You often call Me your Master. This is pleasing to My Heart; but do not forget, My disciple, that you are a disciple of a crucified Master. Let that one word be enough for you. You know what is contained in the cross.**

1514 + I have learned that the greatest power is hidden in patience. I see that patience always leads to victory, although not immediately; but that victory will become manifest after many years. Patience is linked to meekness.

1515 **(113)** + I spent this whole night with Jesus in the dark dungeon. This was a night of adoration. The sisters were praying in the chapel, and I was uniting myself with them in spirit, because poor health prevents me from going to the chapel. But all night long I could not fall asleep, so I spent the night in the dark prison with Jesus. Jesus gave me to know of the sufferings He experienced there. The world will learn about them on the day of judgment.

1516 **My daughter, tell souls that I am giving them My mercy as a defense. I Myself am fighting for them and am bearing the just anger of My Father.**

1517 **Say, My daughter, that the Feast of My Mercy has issued forth from My very depths for the consolation of the whole world.**

1518 Jesus, my peace and my rest, I beg You to give light to that sister, so that she may change interiorly. Support her powerfully with Your grace, so that she, too, may attain perfection.

1519 **(114)** + Today before Holy Communion, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, today talk openly to the Superior** [Mother Irene] **about My mercy because, of all the superiors, she has taken the greatest part in proclaiming My mercy.** And in fact, Mother Superior came this afternoon, and we talked about this Work of God. Mother told me that the images had not come out too well and were not selling very well. “But,” she said, “I have taken a good quantity myself and am distributing them whenever I can and do the best I can to spread the Work of Mercy.” When she had gone, the Lord gave me to know how pleasing this soul was to Him.

1520 Today the Lord said to me, **I have opened My Heart as a living fountain of mercy. Let all souls draw life from it. Let them approach this sea of mercy with great trust. Sinners will attain justification, and the just will be confirmed in good. Whoever places his trust (115) in My mercy will be filled with My divine peace at the hour of death.**

1521 The Lord said to me, **My daughter, do not tire of proclaiming My mercy. In this way you will refresh this Heart of Mine, which burns with a flame of pity for sinners. Tell My priests that hardened sinners will repent on hearing their words when they speak about My unfathomable mercy, about the compassion I have for them in My Heart. To priests who proclaim and extol My mercy, I will give wondrous power; I will anoint their words and touch the hearts of those to whom they will speak.**

1522 Community life is difficult in itself, but it is doubly difficult to get along with proud souls. O God, give me a deeper faith that I may always see in every sister Your Holy Image which has been engraved in her soul...

1523 **(116)** Everlasting love, pure flame, burn in my heart ceaselessly and

deify my whole being, according to Your infinite pleasure by which You summoned me into existence and called me to take part in Your everlasting happiness. O merciful Lord, it is only out of mercy that You have lavished these gifts upon me. Seeing all these free gifts within me, with deep humility I worship Your incomprehensible goodness. Lord, my heart is filled with amazement that You, absolute Lord, in need of no one, would nevertheless stoop so low out of pure love for us. I can never help being amazed that the Lord would have such an intimate relationship with His creatures. That again is His unfathomable goodness. Every time I begin this meditation, I never finish it, because my spirit becomes entirely drowned in Him. What a delight it is to love with all the force of one's soul and to be loved even more in return, to feel and **(117)** experience this with the full consciousness of one's being. There are no words to express this.

1524 January 25, 1938. My Jesus, how good and patient You are! You often look upon us as little children. We often beg You, but we don't know what for, because towards the end of the prayer, when You give us what we have asked for, we do not want to accept it.

1525 One day, a certain sister came to me and asked me for prayers, telling me that she could no longer stand things as they were. "And so, please pray, Sister." I answered that I would, and I began a novena to The Divine Mercy. I learned that God would give her the grace, but that she would once again be dissatisfied when she received it. However, I kept on praying as she had asked me to do. The next day, the same sister came looking for me, and when we again began to talk about the same thing, I told her, "You know, Sister, when we pray, we ought not force the Lord God to give us what we want, but we should rather submit to His holy will." **(118)** But she thought that what she was asking for was indispensable. Towards the end of the novena, the sister came again and said, "O Sister, the Lord Jesus has given me the grace, but now I am of a different mind. Please pray so that things will somehow be different again." I answered, "Yes, I will pray, but that God's will be done in you, Sister, and not what you want."

1526 Most Merciful Heart of Jesus, protect us from the just anger of God.

1527 + A certain sister is constantly persecuting me for the sole reason that

God communes with me so intimately, and she thinks that this is all pretense on my part. When she thinks that I have done something amiss she says, "Some people have revelations, but commit such faults!" She has said this to all the sisters and always in a derogatory sense, in order to make me out as some sort of an oddity. One day, it caused me much pain to think that this insignificant drop which is the human brain can so easily scrutinize **(119)** the gifts of God. After Holy Communion, I prayed that the Lord would enlighten her, but nevertheless I learned that this soul will not attain perfection if she does not change her interior dispositions.

1528 + When I complained to the Lord Jesus about a certain person [saying], "Jesus, how can this person pass judgment like that, even about an intention?" the Lord answered, **Do not be surprised. That soul does not even know her own self, so how could she pass a fair judgment on another soul?**

1529 Today I saw Father Andrasz at prayer. I also knew that he was interceding with the Lord for me. The Lord sometimes makes known to me who is praying for me.

1530 I am keeping myself a bit in the background, as though this work of God did not interest me. I am not speaking about it at present, but my whole soul is steeped in prayer, and I am entreating God to be so good as to hasten this great gift; that is to say, the Feast of Mercy. And I see that Jesus is acting, and is Himself giving the directives as to how this is to be carried out. Nothing happens by accident.

1531 **(120)** Today I said to the Lord Jesus, "Do You see how many difficulties there are [to be overcome] before they will believe that You Yourself are the author of this work? And even now, not everyone believes in it." **Be at peace, My child; nothing can oppose My will. In spite of the murmuring and hostility of the sisters, My will shall be done in you in all its fullness, down to the last detail of My wishes and My designs. Do not become sad about this; I too was a stumbling stone for some souls.**

1532 + Jesus complained to me of how painful to Him is the unfaithfulness of chosen souls, **and My heart is even more wounded by their distrust after a fall. It would be less painful if they had not experienced the**

goodness of My heart.

1533 I saw the anger of God hanging heavy over Poland. And now I see that if God were to visit our country with the greatest chastisements, that would still be great mercy because, for such grave transgressions, He could punish **(121)** us with eternal annihilation. I was paralyzed with fear when the Lord lifted the veil a little for me. Now I see clearly that chosen souls keep the world in existence to fulfill the measure [of justice].

1534 + I saw a certain priest's efforts in prayer. His prayer is similar to that of the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Olives. Oh, if that priest [probably Father Sopocko] only knew how pleasing to God that prayer was!

1535 O Jesus, I am locking myself in Your most merciful Heart as in a fortress, impregnable against the missiles of my enemies.

1536 Today I found myself in the presence of a certain dying person who was approaching death in my home neighborhood. I supported her with my prayers and, after a few moments, I felt for a short while pain in my hands, feet and side...

1537 **(122)** January 27, 1938. During Holy Hour today, Jesus complained to me about the ingratitude of souls:

In return for My blessings, I get ingratitude. In return for My love, I get forgetfulness and indifference. My Heart cannot bear this.

1538 At that moment, love for Jesus was enkindled so strongly in my heart that, offering myself for ungrateful souls, I immersed myself completely in Him. When I came to my senses, the Lord allowed me to taste a little of the ingratitude which flooded His Heart. This experience lasted for a short while.

1539 Today I said to the Lord, "When will You take me to Yourself I've been feeling so ill, and I've been waiting for Your coming with such longing!" Jesus answered me, **Be always ready; I will not leave you in this exile for long. My holy will must be fulfilled in you.** O Lord, if Your holy will has not yet been entirely fulfilled in me, here I am, ready for everything that You want, O Lord! **(123)** O my Jesus, there is only one thing which surprises me; namely, that You make so many secrets

known to me; but that one secret — the hour of my death — You do not want to tell me. And the Lord answered me, **Be at peace; I will let you know, but not just now.** Ah, my Lord, I beg Your pardon for wanting to know this. You know very well why, because You know my yearning heart, which is eagerly going out to You. You know that I would not want to die even a minute before the time which You have appointed for me before the ages.

Jesus listened with wondrous kindness to the outpourings of my heart.

1540 (124) January 28, 1938. Today the Lord said to me, **My daughter, write down these words: All those souls who will glorify My mercy and spread its worship, encouraging others to trust in My mercy, will not experience terror at the hour of death. My mercy will shield them in that final battle...**

1541 **My daughter, encourage souls to say the chaplet which I have given to you. It pleases Me to grant everything they ask of Me by saying the chaplet. When hardened sinners say it, I will fill their souls with peace, and the hour of their death will be a happy one.**

Write this for the benefit of distressed souls; when a soul sees and realizes the gravity of its sins, when the whole abyss of the misery into which it immersed itself is displayed before its eyes, let it not despair, but with trust let it throw itself into the arms of My mercy, as a child into the arms of its beloved mother. These souls (125) have a right of priority to My compassionate Heart, they have first access to My mercy. Tell them that no soul that has called upon My mercy has been disappointed or brought to shame. I delight particularly in a soul which has placed its trust in My goodness.

Write that when they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the merciful Savior.

1542 At that moment, the Lord gave me to know how jealous He is of my heart.

Even among the sisters you will feel lonely. Know then that I want you to unite yourself more closely to Me. I am concerned about every

beat of your heart. Every stirring of your love is reflected in My Heart. I thirst for your love. “Yes, O Jesus, but my heart would not be able to live without You, either; for even if the hearts of all creatures were offered to me, they would not satisfy the depths of my heart.”

1543 **(126)** Today toward evening, the Lord said to me, **Entrust yourself completely to Me at the hour of death, and I will present you to My Father as My bride. And now I recommend that you unite, in a special way, even your smallest deeds to My merits, and then My Father will look upon them with love as if they were My own.**

1544 **Do not change your particular examen which I have given you through Father Andrasz; namely, that you unite yourself with Me continually. That is what I am clearly asking of you today. Be a child toward My representatives, because I borrow their lips to speak to you, so that you will have no doubts about anything.**

1545 My health has improved somewhat. I went down to the refectory and the chapel today. I still cannot resume my duties, and so I stay in my cell at the hand-loom [making borders for altar linens]. I enjoy this work very much, but still, even with such light work, I tire easily. **(127)** I see how feeble I am. There are no indifferent moments in my life, since every moment of my life is filled with prayer, suffering and work. If not in one way, then in another, I glorify God; and if God were to give me a second life, I do not know whether I would make better use of it...

1546 The Lord said to me, **I am delighted with your love. Your sincere love is as pleasing to My Heart as the fragrance of a rosebud at morningtide, before the sun has taken the dew from it. The freshness of your heart captivates Me; that is why I unite Myself with you more closely than with any other creature...**

1547 Today I saw the efforts of this priest [Father Sopocko] concerning the affairs of God. His heart is beginning to taste that which filled God's Heart during His earthly life. In recompense for his efforts — ingratitude... But he is very zealous for the glory of God...

1548 **(128)** January 30, 1938. One-day retreat.

The Lord gave me to know, during meditation, that as long as my heart

beats in my breast, I must always strive to spread the Kingdom of God on earth. I am to fight for the glory of my Creator.

I know that I will give God the glory He expects of me if I try faithfully to cooperate with God's grace.

1549 I want to live in the spirit of faith. I accept everything that comes my way as given me by the loving will of God, who sincerely desires my happiness. And so I will accept with submission and gratitude everything that God sends me. I will pay no attention to the voice of nature and to the promptings of self-love. Before each important action, I will stop to consider for a moment what relationship it has to eternal life and what may be the main reason for my undertaking it: is it for the glory of God, or for the good of my own soul, or for the good of the souls of others? If my heart says yes, then I will not swerve from carrying out the given action, **(129)** un-mindful of either obstacles or sacrifices. I will not be frightened into abandoning my intention. It is enough for me to know that it is pleasing to God. On the other hand, if I learn that the action has nothing in common with what I have just mentioned, I will try to elevate it to a loftier sphere by means of a good intention. And if I learn that something flows from my self-love, I will cancel it out right from the start.

1550 In cases of doubt, I will not act, but will scrupulously seek clarifications from the priests, and in particular from my spiritual director. I will not give explanations on my own behalf when someone reproaches me or criticizes me, unless I am directly asked to bear witness to the truth. With great patience, I will listen when others open their hearts to me, accept their sufferings, give them spiritual comfort, but drown my own sufferings in the most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will never leave the depths of His mercy, while bringing the whole world into those depths.

1551 **(130)** In the meditation on death, I asked the Lord to deign to fill my heart with those sentiments which I will have at the moment of my death. And through God's grace I received an interior reply that I had done what was within my power and so could be at peace. At that moment, such profound gratitude to God was awakened in my soul that I burst into tears of joy like a little child. I prepared to receive Holy Communion next morning as "viaticum," and I said the prayers of the dying²³⁴ for my own

intention.

1552 Then I heard the words: **As you are united with Me in life, so will you be united at the moment of death.** After these words, such great trust in God's great mercy was awakened in my soul that, even if I had had the sins of the whole world, as well as the sins of all the condemned souls weighing on my conscience, I would not have doubted God's goodness but, without hesitation, would have thrown myself into the abyss of the divine mercy, which is always open to us; and, with a heart crushed to dust, I would have cast **(131)** myself at His feet, abandoning myself totally to His holy will, which is mercy itself.

1553 O my Jesus, Life of my soul, my Life, my Savior, my sweetest Bridegroom, and at the same time my Judge, You know that in this last hour of mine I do not count on any merits of my own, but only on Your mercy. Even as of today, I immerse myself totally in the abyss of Your mercy, which is always open to every soul.

O my Jesus, I have only one task to carry out in my lifetime, in death, and throughout eternity, and that is to adore Your incomprehensible mercy. No mind, either of angel or of man, will ever fathom the mysteries of Your mercy, O God. The angels are lost in amazement before the mystery of divine mercy, but cannot comprehend it. Everything that has come from the Creator's hand is contained in this inconceivable mystery; that is to say, in the very depths of His tender mercy, When I meditate on this, my spirit swoons, and my heart dissolves in joy. O Jesus, it is through Your most compassionate Heart, as through a crystal, **(132)** that the rays of divine mercy have come to us.

1554 February 1, [1938]. Today I am feeling a little worse, physically, but I am still taking part in the common life [prayers, meals, and recreation]. I am making great efforts, known to You alone, Jesus. In the refectory today, I did not think I would last until the end of the meal. Every mouthful causes me extreme pain.

1555 When Mother S. [Irene] visited me a week ago, she said, "You catch every sickness, Sister, because your system is so weak, but that is not your fault. In fact, if any other sister had that same sickness, she would certainly be walking around; whereas you, Sister, must stay in bed!"

These words did not hurt me, but it is better not to make such comparisons with very sick persons, because their cup is full enough as it is. Another thing: when sisters visit the sick, they should not ask in detail every time, “What is hurting you, **(133)** and how does it hurt?” because it is very tiresome to keep telling each sister the same thing about oneself. And it sometimes happens that one must repeat the same thing over and over many times a day.

1556 When I had gone to the chapel for a moment, the Lord gave me to know that, among His chosen ones, there are some who are especially chosen, and whom He calls to a higher form of holiness, to exceptional union with Him. These are seraphic souls, from whom God demands greater love than He does from others. Although all live in the same convent, yet He sometimes demands of a particular soul a greater degree of love. Such a soul understands this call, because God makes this known to it interiorly, but the soul may either follow this call or not. It depends on the soul itself whether it is faithful to these touches of the Holy Spirit, or whether it resists them. I have learned that there is a place in purgatory where souls will pay their debt to God for such transgressions; this kind of torment is the most difficult of all. The soul which is specially marked by God **(134)** will be distinguished everywhere, whether in heaven or in purgatory or in hell. In heaven, it will be distinguished from other souls by greater glory and radiance and deeper knowledge of God. In purgatory, by greater pain, because it knows God more profoundly and desires Him more vehemently. In hell, it will suffer more profoundly than other souls, because it knows more fully whom it has lost. This indelible mark of God’s exclusive love, in the [soul], will not be obliterated.

1557 O Jesus, keep me in holy fear, so that I may not waste graces. Help me to be faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Grant that my heart may burst for love of You, rather than I should neglect even one act of love for You.

1558 February 2, [1938]. Darkness of the soul. Today is the Feast of the Mother of God, and in my soul it is so dark. The Lord has hidden Himself, and I am alone, all alone. My mind has become so dimmed that I see only phantasms about me. Not a single ray of light penetrates my soul. I do not understand myself or those who speak to me. Frightful

temptations (135) regarding the holy faith assail me. O my Jesus, save me. I cannot say anything more. I cannot describe these things in detail, for I fear lest someone be scandalized on reading this. I am astounded that such torments could befall a soul. O hurricane, what are you doing to the boat of my heart? This storm has lasted the whole day and night.

When Mother Superior [Irene] came in to see me and asked, “Would you like to take advantage of this occasion, Sister, since Father An. [Andrasz] is coming to hear confessions?” I answered, no. It seemed to me that Father would not understand me, nor would I be able to make a confession.

I spent the whole night with Jesus in Gethsemane. From my breast there escaped one continuous moan. A natural dying will be much easier, because then one is in agony and will die; while here, one is in agony, but cannot die. O Jesus, I never thought such suffering could exist. Nothingness: that is the reality. O Jesus, save me! I believe in You with all my heart. So many times have I seen the radiance of Your face, and now, where are You, Lord? ... I believe, I believe, and again I believe (136) in You, Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and in all the truths which Your holy Church gives me to believe... But the darkness does not recede, and my spirit plunges into even greater agony. And at that moment, such terrible torment overwhelmed me that now I am amazed at myself that I did not breathe my last, but this was for only a brief instant.

1559 At that moment I saw Jesus, and from His Heart there issued those same two rays, which enveloped me, whole and entire. At the same moment, all my torments vanished. **My daughter**, the Lord said, **know that of yourself you are just what you have gone through, and it is only by My grace that you are a participant of eternal life and all the gifts I lavish on you.** And with these words of the Lord, there came to me a true knowledge of myself. Jesus is giving me a lesson in deep humility and, at the same time, one of total trust in Him. My heart is reduced to dust and ashes, and even if all people were to trample me under their feet, I would still consider that (137) a favor.

I feel and am, in fact, very deeply permeated with the knowledge that I am nothing, so that real humiliations will be a refreshment for me.

1560 February 3, [1938]. Today after Holy Communion, Jesus again gave me a few directives: **First, do not fight against a temptation by yourself, but disclose it to the confessor at once, and then the temptation will lose all its force. Second, during these ordeals do not lose your peace; live in My presence; ask My Mother and the Saints for help. Third, have the certitude that I am looking at you and supporting you. Fourth, do not fear either struggles of the soul or any temptations, because I am supporting you; if only you are willing to fight, know that the victory is always on your side. Fifth, know that by fighting bravely you give Me great glory and amass merits for yourself. Temptation gives you a chance to show Me your fidelity.**

1561 And now I am going to tell you something that is most important for you: **Boundless sincerity with your spiritual director. If you do not take advantage of this great grace according to (138) My instructions, I will take him away from you, and then you will be left to yourself; and all the torments, which you know very well, will return to you. It displeases Me that you do not take advantage of the opportunity when you are able to see him and talk with him. Know that it is a great grace on My part when I give a spiritual director to a soul. Many souls ask Me for this, but it is not to all that I grant this grace. From the moment when I gave you this priest as spiritual director, I endowed him with new light so that he might easily know and understand your soul...**

1562 O my Jesus, my only mercy, allow me to see contentment in Your face as a sign of reconciliation with me, because my heart cannot bear Your seriousness; if this continues a moment longer my heart will burst with grief. You see that I am even now crushed to dust.

1563 And at that very moment I saw myself in some kind of a palace; and Jesus gave me His hand, sat me at His side, and said with kindness, **My bride, you always please Me by your humility. The greatest misery does not stop Me from (139) uniting Myself to a soul, but where there is pride, I am not there.**

When I came to myself, I reflected on what had happened in my heart, thanking God for His love and for the mercy that He had shown me.

1564 Jesus, hide me; just as You have hidden Yourself under the form of the white Host, so hide me from human eyes, and particularly hide the gifts which You so kindly grant me. May I not betray outwardly what You are effecting in my soul. I am a white host before You, O Divine Priest. Consecrate me Yourself, and may my transubstantiation be known only to You. I stand before You each day as a sacrificial host and implore Your mercy upon the world. In silence, and unseen, I will empty myself before You; my pure and undivided love will burn, in profound silence, as a holocaust. And may the fragrance of my love be wafted to the foot of Your throne. You are the Lord of lords, but You delight in innocent and humble souls.

1565 **(140)** When I entered the chapel for a moment, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, help Me to save a certain dying sinner. Say the chaplet that I have taught you for him.** When I began to say the chaplet, I saw the man dying in the midst of terrible torment and struggle. His Guardian Angel was defending him, but he was, as it were, powerless against the enormity of the soul's misery. A multitude of devils was waiting for the soul. But while I was saying the chaplet, I saw Jesus just as He is depicted in the image. The rays which issued from Jesus' Heart enveloped the sick man, and the powers of darkness fled in panic. The sick man peacefully breathed his last. When I came to myself, I understood how very important the chaplet was for the dying. It appeases the anger of God.

1566 When I was apologizing to the Lord Jesus for a certain action of mine which, a little later, turned out to be imperfect, Jesus put me at ease with these words: **My daughter, I reward you for the purity of your intention which you had (141) at the time when you acted. My Heart rejoiced that you had My love under consideration at the time you acted, and that in so distinct a way; and even now you still derive benefit from this; that is, from the humiliation. Yes, My child, I want you to always have such great purity of intention in the very least things you undertake.**

1567 As I took the pen in hand, I addressed a short prayer to the Holy Spirit and said, "Jesus, bless this pen so that everything You order me to write may be for the glory of God." Then I heard a voice: **Yes, I bless [it],**

because this writing bears the seal of obedience to your superior and confessor, and by that very fact I am already given glory, and many souls will be drawing profit from it. My daughter, I demand that you devote all your free moments to writing about My goodness and mercy. It is your office and your assignment throughout your life to continue to make known to souls the great mercy I have for them and to exhort them to trust in My bottomless mercy.

1568 (142) O my Jesus, I believe in Your words and no longer have any doubt about this because in the course of one conversation with Mother Superior [Irene], she told me to write more about Your mercy. That statement was very much in accord with Your request. O my Jesus, I now understand that if You demand something from a soul, You also inspire the superiors to allow us to fulfill Your demands, even though it sometimes happens that we do not receive permission at once, and our patience is often put to the test...

1569 + O Everlasting Love, Jesus, who have enclosed Yourself in the Host,
And there in hide Your divinity and conceal Your beauty,
You do this in order to give Yourself, whole and entire, to my soul
And in order not to terrify it with Your greatness.

O Everlasting Love, Jesus, who have shrouded Yourself with bread,
Eternal Light, incomprehensible Fountain of joy and happiness,
Because You want to be heaven on earth to me,
That indeed You are, when Your love, O God, imparts itself to me.

1570 (143) O Greatly Merciful God, Infinite Goodness, today all mankind calls out from the abyss of its misery to Your mercy — to Your compassion, O God; and it is with its mighty voice of misery that it cries out. Gracious God, do not reject the prayer of this earth's exiles! O Lord, Goodness beyond our understanding, Who are acquainted with our misery through and through, and know that by our own power we cannot ascend to You, we implore You: anticipate us with Your grace and keep on increasing Your mercy in us, that we may faithfully do Your holy will all through our life and at death's hour. Let the omnipotence of Your mercy shield us from the darts of our salvation's enemies, that we may with confidence, as Your children, await Your final coming — that day known to You alone. And we expect to obtain everything promised us by

Jesus in spite of all our wretchedness. For Jesus is our Hope: Through His merciful Heart, as through an open gate, we pass through to heaven.

1571 **(144)** I have noticed that, from the very moment I entered the convent, I have been charged with one thing; namely, that I am a saint. But this word was always used scoffingly. At first, this hurt me very much, but when I had risen above it, I paid no attention to it. However, when on one occasion a certain person [perhaps Father Sopocko] suffered because of my sanctity, I was very pained that, because of me, others can experience some unpleasantness. And I began to complain to the Lord Jesus, asking why this should be so, and the Lord answered me, **Are you sad because of this? Of course you are a saint. Soon I Myself will make this manifest in you, and they will pronounce the same word, *saint*, only this time it will be with love.**

1572 **I remind you, My daughter, that as often as you hear the clock strike the third hour, immerse yourself completely in My mercy, adoring and glorifying it; invoke its omnipotence for the whole world, and particularly for poor sinners; for at that moment mercy was opened wide for every (145) soul. In this hour you can obtain everything for yourself and for others for the asking; it was the hour of grace for the whole world — mercy triumphed over justice.**

My daughter, try your best to make the Stations of the Cross in this hour, provided that your duties permit it; and if you are not able to make the Stations of the Cross, then at least step into the chapel for a moment and adore, in the Blessed Sacrament, My Heart, which is full of mercy; and should you be unable to step into the chapel, immerse yourself in prayer there where you happen to be, if only for a very brief instant. I claim veneration for My mercy from every creature, but above all from you, since it is to you that I have given the most profound understanding of this mystery.

1573 + O my God, I am overcome with great longing for You today. Oh, nothing else any longer occupies my heart. The earth no longer contains anything for me. O Jesus, how strongly I feel this exile, how very prolonged it is for me! O death, messenger of God, when will you announce to me that longed-for moment, through which I will be united to my God forever?

1574 **(146)** O my Jesus, may the last days of my exile be spent totally according to Your most holy will. I unite my sufferings, my bitterness and my last agony itself to Your Sacred Passion; and I offer myself for the whole world to implore an abundance of God's mercy for souls, and in particular for the souls who are in our homes. I firmly trust and commit myself entirely to Your holy will, which is mercy itself. Your mercy will be everything for me at the last hour, as You Yourself have promised me...

1575 + Hail to You, Eternal Love, my Sweet Jesus, who have condescended to dwell in my heart! I salute You, O glorious Godhead who have deigned to stoop to me, and out of love for me have so emptied Yourself as to assume the insignificant form of bread. I salute You, Jesus, never-fading flower of humanity. You are all there is for my soul. Your love is purer than a lily, and Your presence is more pleasing to me than the fragrance of a hyacinth. Your friendship is more tender **(147)** and subtle than the scent of a rose, and yet it is stronger than death. O Jesus, incomprehensible beauty, it is with pure souls that You communicate best, because they alone are capable of heroism and sacrifice. O sweet, rose-red blood of Jesus, ennoble my blood and change it into Your own blood, and let this be done to me according to Your good pleasure.

1576 **Know, My daughter, that between Me and you there is a bottomless abyss, an abyss which separates the Creator from the creature. But this abyss is filled with My mercy. I raise you up to Myself, not that I have need of you, but it is solely out of mercy that I grant you the grace of union with Myself.**

1577 **Tell souls not to place within their own hearts obstacles to My mercy, which so greatly wants to act within them. My mercy works in all those hearts which open their doors to it. Both the sinner and the righteous person have need (148) of My mercy. Conversion, as well as perseverance, is a grace of My mercy.**

1578 **Let souls who are striving for perfection particularly adore My mercy, because the abundance of graces which I grant them flows from My mercy. I desire that these souls distinguish themselves by boundless trust in My mercy. I myself will attend to the sanctification of such souls. I will provide them with everything they will need to**

attain sanctity. The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is — trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much. On the other hand, I am sad when souls ask for little, when they narrow their hearts.

1579 **(149)** + It is when I meet with hypocrisy that I suffer most. Now I understand You, my Savior, for rebuking the pharisees so severely for their hypocrisy. You associated more graciously with hardened sinners when they approached You contritely.

1580 My Jesus, I now see that I have gone through all the stages of my life following You: childhood, youth, vocation, apostolic work, Tabor, Gethsemane, and now I am already with You on Calvary. I have willingly allowed myself to be crucified, and I am indeed already crucified; although I can still walk a little, I am stretched out on the cross, and I feel distinctly that strength is flowing to me from Your cross, that You and You alone are my perseverance. Although I often hear the voice of temptation calling to me, “Come down from the cross!” the power of God strengthens me. Although loneliness and darkness and sufferings of all kinds beat against my heart, the mysterious power of God supports and strengthens me. I want to drink the cup **(150)** to the last drop. I trust firmly that Your grace, which has sustained me in the Garden of Olives, will sustain me also now that I am on Calvary.

1581 O my Jesus, my Master, I unite my desires to the desires that You had on the cross: I desire to fulfill Your holy will; I desire the conversion of souls; I desire that Your mercy be adored; I desire that the triumph of the Church be hastened; I desire the Feast of Mercy to be celebrated all over the world; I desire sanctity for priests; I desire that there be a saint in our Congregation; I desire that our whole Congregation have a great spirit of zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls; I desire that souls who live in our homes do not offend God, but persevere in good; I desire that the blessing of God descend upon my parents and my whole family; I desire that God give special light to my spiritual directors, and in particular to Father An. and Father So.; I desire a special blessing **(151)**

for Superiors²³⁵ under whose direction I have been, and in particular for Mother General (Michael), for Mother Irene and for the Directress of Novices, Mother [Mary] Joseph.

1582 O my Jesus, I now embrace the whole world and ask You for mercy for it. When You tell me, O God, that it is enough, that Your holy will has been completely accomplished, then, my Savior, in union with You, I will commit my soul into the hands of the Heavenly Father, full of trust in Your unfathomable mercy. And when I stand at the foot of Your throne, the first hymn that I will sing will be one to Your mercy. Poor earth, I will not forget you. Although I feel that I will be immediately drowned in God as in an ocean of happiness, that will not be an obstacle to my returning to earth to encourage souls and incite them to trust in God's mercy. Indeed, this immersion in God will give me the possibility of boundless action.

1583 As I write this, I hear Satan grinding his teeth. He cannot stand God's mercy, and keeps banging things in my cell. But I feel so much of God's power within me that it does not even bother me that the enemy of our salvation gets angry, **(152)** and I quietly keep on writing.

1584 O inconceivable goodness of God, which shields us at every step, may Your mercy be praised without cease. That You became a brother to humans, not to angels, is a miracle of the unfathomable mystery of Your mercy. All our trust is in You, our first-born Brother, Jesus Christ, true God and true Man. My heart flutters with joy to see how good God is to us wretched and ungrateful people. And as a proof of His love, He gives us the incomprehensible gift of Himself in the person of His Son. Throughout all eternity we shall never exhaust that mystery of love. O mankind, why do you think so little about God being truly among us? O Lamb of God, I do not know what to admire in You first: Your gentleness, Your hidden life, the emptying of Yourself for the sake of man, or the constant miracle of Your mercy, which transforms souls **(153)** and raises them up to eternal life. Although You are hidden in this way, Your omnipotence is more manifest here than in the creation of man. Though the omnipotence of Your mercy is at work in the justification of the sinner, yet Your action is gentle and hidden.

1585 A vision of the Mother of God. In the midst of a great brilliance, I saw

the Mother of God clothed in a white gown, girt about with a golden cincture; and there were tiny stars, also of gold, over the whole garment, and chevron-shaped sleeves lined with gold. Her cloak was sky-blue, lightly thrown over the shoulders. A transparent veil was delicately drawn over her head, while her flowing hair was set off beautifully by a golden crown which terminated in little crosses. On Her left arm She held the Child Jesus. A Blessed Mother of this type I had not yet seen. Then She looked at me kindly and said: I am the *Mother of God of Priests*.²³⁶ At that, She lowered Jesus from Her arm to the ground, raised Her right hand heavenward and said: *O God, bless Poland, bless priests*. Then She addressed me once again: *Tell the priests what you have seen*. (154) I resolved that at the first opportunity [I would have] of seeing Father [Andrasz] I would tell; but I myself can make nothing of this vision.

1586 O my Jesus, You see how very grateful I am to Father Sopocko, who has advanced Your work so much. That soul, so humble, has had to endure all the storms. He has not allowed himself to become discouraged by adversities, but has faithfully responded to the call of God.

1587 + One of the sisters was appointed to look after the sick, but she was so negligent that one had to practice real mortification. One day, I made up my mind to tell the Superior about it, but then I heard a voice in my soul: **Bear it patiently; someone else will tell her**. But the service was like that for a whole month. When I was finally able to come down to the refectory and to recreation, I heard these words in my soul: **Now other sisters are going to tell (155) about that sister's negligent service, but you are to keep silent and not speak about the matter**. And at that point there broke out sharp criticism of the sister, but she could find nothing [to say] in her own defense, and all the sisters said in chorus, "Sister, you had better improve in your care of the sick." I have found that sometimes the Lord does not want us to say something on our own; He has His ways and knows when to speak out.

1588 Today I heard the words: **In the Old Covenant I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to My people. Today I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to My Merciful Heart. I use punishment when they themselves force Me to do so; My**

hand is reluctant to take hold of the sword of justice. Before the Day of Justice I am sending the Day of Mercy. I replied, "O my Jesus, speak to souls Yourself, because my words are insignificant."

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(156) J. M. J.

The Soul's Expectation of the Coming of the Lord.

1589 I do not know, O Lord, at what hour You will come.

And so I keep constant watch and listen

As Your chosen bride,

Knowing that You like to come unexpected,

Yet, a pure heart will sense You from afar, O Lord.

I wait for You, Lord, in calm and silence,

With great longing in my heart

And with invincible desire.

I feel that my love for You is changing into fire,

And that it will rise up to heaven like a flame at life's end,

And then all my wishes will be fulfilled.

Come then, at last, my most sweet Lord

And take my thirsting heart

There, to Your home in the lofty regions of heaven,

Where Your eternal life perdures.

Life on this earth is but an agony,

As my heart feels it is created for the heights.

For it the lowlands of this life hold no interest,

For my homeland is in heaven — this I firmly believe.

[End of Notebook Five]

*Sr. M. Faustina of the Blessed
Sacrament of the Congregation of the
Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy
The Mercy of God I will Praise
Forever.*

NOTEBOOK VI

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(1) J.M.J.

1590 Praise, O my soul,
the incomprehensible mercy of God.
May all be for His glory.

Cracow, February 10, 1938.

Sixth Notebook.

Sister Faustina of the Blessed Sacrament
of the Congregation
of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy.

1591 My heart is drawn there where my God is hidden,
Where He dwells with us day and night,
Clothed in the White Host;
He governs the whole world, He communes with souls.

My heart is drawn there where my God is hiding,
Where His love is immolated.
But my heart senses that the living water is here;
It is my living God, though a veil hides Him.

1592 **(2)** February 10, 1938. During meditation, the Lord gave me knowledge of the joy of heaven and of the saints on our arrival there; they love God as the sole object of their love, but they also have a tender and heartfelt love for us. It is from the face of God that this joy flows out upon all, because we see Him face to face. His face is so sweet that the soul falls anew into ecstasy.

1593 The Lord Himself moves me to write prayers and hymns about His mercy, and these hymns of praise force themselves upon my lips. I have noticed that readyformulated words of praise of God's mercy enter my mind, and so I have resolved to write them down in so far as is within my power. I can feel God urging me to do so.

1594 One of the sisters came into my cell for a little while. After a short conversation on the subject of obedience, she said to me, "Oh, now I understand how the saints **(3)** acted. Thank you, Sister; a great light has

entered my soul; I have profited much.”

1595 O my Jesus, this is Your work. It is You who have spoken thus to that soul, because this sister came in when I was completely immersed in God, and it was just at that moment when this deep recollection left me. O my Jesus, I know that, in order to be useful to souls, one has to strive for the closest possible union with You, who are Eternal Love. One word from a soul united to God effects more good in souls than eloquent discussions and sermons from an imperfect soul.

1596 + I saw Father A. [Andrasz’s] surprise at my actions, but all that is for the glory of God. Oh, how great is Your grace, O Lord, grace which lifts the soul up to greater heights. I am very grateful to the Lord for having given me an enlightened priest. You could have continued to leave me in uncertainties and hesitations, but Your goodness **(4)** remedied that. O my Jesus, it is impossible for me to count Your favors...

1597 **My daughter, your struggle will last until death. Your last breath will mark its end. You shall conquer by meekness.**

1598 February 13, 1938. I saw how unwillingly the Lord Jesus came to certain souls in Holy Communion. And He spoke these words to me: **I enter into certain hearts as into a second Passion.**

1599 As I was trying to make my Holy Hour, I saw the suffering Jesus, who spoke these words to me: **My daughter, do not pay so much attention to the vessel of grace as to the grace itself which I give you, because you are not always pleased with the vessel, and then the graces, too, become deficient. I want to guard you from that, and I want you never to pay attention to the vessel in which I send you My grace. Let all the attention of your soul (5) be concentrated on responding to My grace as faithfully as possible.**

1600 + O my Jesus, if You Yourself do not soothe the longing of my soul, then no one can either comfort or soothe it. Your every approach arouses new raptures of love in my soul, but also a new agony; because, despite all Your approaches to my soul, even the most exceptional, I am still loving You from a distance, and my heart dies in an ecstasy of love; because this is still not the complete and eternal union, although You

commune with me so very often unveiled [as if face to face]; nevertheless, You thereby open in my soul and heart an abyss of love and desire for You, my God, and this bottomless abyss, this total desiring of God, cannot be completely filled on this earth.

1601 The Lord has given me to know how much He desires the perfection of chosen souls.

Chosen souls are, in My hand, lights which I cast into the darkness of the world and with which I illumine it. As stars illumine the night, so chosen souls (6) illumine the earth. And the more perfect a soul is, the stronger and the more far-reaching is the light shed by it. It can be hidden and unknown, even to those closest to it, and yet its holiness is reflected in souls even to the most distant extremities of the world.

1602 Today the Lord said to me, **Daughter, when you go to confession, to this fountain of My mercy, the Blood and Water which came forth from My Heart always flows down upon your soul and ennobles it. Every time you go to confession, immerse yourself entirely in My mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of My grace upon your soul. When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest, but I Myself act in your soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy. Tell souls that from this fount of mercy (7) souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity. The torrents of grace inundate humble souls. The proud remain always in poverty and misery, because My grace turns away from them to humble souls.**

1603 February 14, [1938]. During adoration, I heard these words: **Pray for one of the students who has great need of My grace.** And I recognized N. I prayed hard, and God's mercy embraced that soul.

1604 When, during adoration, I repeated the prayer, "Holy God" several times, a vivid presence of God suddenly swept over me, and I was caught up in spirit before the majesty of God. I saw how the Angels and the Saints of the Lord give glory to God. The glory of God is so great that I dare not try to describe it, because I would not be able to do so, and souls

might think that what I have written **(8)** is all there is. Saint Paul, I understand now why you did not want to describe heaven, but only said that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him [cf. I Cor. 2:9; 2 Cor. 12:1-7]. Yes, that is indeed so. And all that has come forth from God returns to Him in the same way and gives Him perfect glory. Now I have seen the way in which I adore God; oh, how miserable it is! And what a tiny drop it is in comparison to that perfect heavenly glory. O my God, how good You are to accept my praise as well, and to turn Your Face to me with kindness and let us know that our prayer is pleasing to You.

1605 Write down everything that occurs to you regarding My goodness. I answered, “What do You mean, Lord, what if I write too much?” And the Lord replied, **My daughter, even if you were to speak at one and the same time in all human and angelic tongues, even then you would not have said very much, but on the contrary, you would have sung in only a small measure the praises (9) of My goodness — of My unfathomable mercy.**

O my Jesus, You Yourself must put words into my mouth, that I may praise You worthily.

My daughter, be at peace; do as I tell you. Your thoughts are united to My thoughts, so write whatever comes to your mind. You are the secretary of My mercy. I have chosen you for that office in this life and the next life. That is how I want it to be in spite of all the opposition they will give you. Know that My choice will not change.

At that moment I steeped myself in profound humility before God’s majesty. But the more I humbled myself, the more God’s presence penetrated me...

1606 O Jesus, my only solace! How frightful is this exile! How terrible this wilderness I have to cross! My soul is struggling through a terrible thicket of all kinds of difficulties. If You Yourself did not support me, Lord, there would be no thought of my moving forward.

1607 (10) 16 [February] 1938. As I was praying to the living Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for the intention of a certain priest, Jesus

suddenly gave me knowledge of His goodness and said to me, **I will give him nothing that is beyond his strength.**

1608 + When I learned of some of the sufferings and troubles that a certain person²³⁷ was going through in connection with this whole work of God, I asked the Lord Jesus before Holy Communion that He might make known to me whether by any chance these sufferings were not caused by me: “My sweetest Jesus, I implore You by Your infinite goodness and mercy, make known to me whether anything in this matter displeases You or whether there is some fault of mine in this. If there is, I ask You, when You enter my heart, fill it with unrest and make known to me Your displeasure. And if I am not guilty in this matter, confirm me in peace.” When I received the Lord, my soul was filled with great peace, and the Lord gave me to know that the work was undergoing a trial, but **(11)** was no less pleasing to God because of this. I felt great joy at this but I redoubled my prayers so that this work might come through the ordeal unharmed.

1609 O my Jesus, how good it is to be on the cross, but with You! With You, my Love, my soul is constantly stretched out on the cross and is being filled with bitterness. Vinegar and gall touch my lips, but it is good that it is so, because Your Divine Heart was filled with bitterness throughout Your life, and in return for Your love You received ingratitude. You were in such pain that a sorrowful complaint escaped Your lips when You said that You were looking for someone to console You and You found none [cf. Ps. 68:21].

1610 + When I asked the Lord to be so good as to cast a glance upon a certain soul [probably Father Sopocko) who was struggling alone against many difficulties, the Lord gave me to know, in an instant, that all people are as dust under His feet. **So do not worry; you see that they cannot do a thing of themselves. And if I allow them to seem to triumph, I do this for the sake of My (12) impenetrable decrees.** I experienced great peace in seeing how all things are determined by the Lord.

1611 + When the chaplain [Father Theodore] brings me the Lord Jesus, there are moments when I am pervaded with a very vivid presence of God, and the Lord gives me to know His holiness. At such times, I see the smallest speck on my soul, and I would like to purify my soul before every Holy

Communion. When I asked the confessor, he said there was no need to confess before every Holy Communion. Holy Communion takes away these tiny things and it is a temptation to think about confession when receiving Holy Communion. I did not go on to explain the condition of my soul in any greater detail, because he was not my director, but the confessor.²³⁸ This knowledge does not take up my time, because it is faster than lightning; it enkindles my love, leaving me with a knowledge of myself...

1612 **(13)** + February 20, [1938]. Today the Lord said to me, **I have need of your sufferings to rescue souls.**

O my Jesus, do with me as You please. I did not have the courage to ask the Lord Jesus for greater sufferings, because I had suffered so much the night before that I would not have been able to bear a drop more than what Jesus Himself gave me.

1613 Almost all night I had such violent pains that it seemed all my intestines were torn to pieces. I threw up the medicine I had taken. When I bowed my head down to the ground, I lost consciousness, and I stayed like that for some time, with my head **(14)** on the floor. When I came to, I became aware that my whole body was pressing on my head and face, and that I was covered with vomit. I thought it would be the end of me. Dear Mother Superior [Irene] and Sister Tarcisia²³⁹ were trying to help me as best they could. Jesus demanded suffering, but not death. O my Jesus, do with me as You please. Only give me strength to suffer. Since Your strength supports me, I shall bear everything. O souls, how I love you!

1614 Today, one of the sisters [probably Sister Amelia²⁴⁰] came to see me and said, "Sister, I have a strange feeling, as though something were telling me to come to you and commend to you certain problems of mine before you die, and that perhaps you will be able to beseech the Lord Jesus and arrange these things for me. Something keeps telling me that you will be able to obtain this for me." I answered her with equal frankness that, yes, I felt in my soul that **(15)** after my death I would be able to obtain more from the Lord Jesus than at the present time. "I will remember you, Sister, before His throne."

1615 When I entered the neighboring dormitory to visit the sisters who were

ill, one of them said to me, “Sister, when you die I will not fear you at all. Come to see me after you die, because I want to confide to you a secret concerning my soul, something I want you to settle for me with the Lord Jesus. I know you can obtain this from Him.” Because she was speaking in public I answered her in this way: “The Lord Jesus is very discreet. And so He never betrays to anyone a secret that is between Him and a soul.”

1616 + O my Lord, thank You for conforming me to Yourself through immolation. I see that this earthly vessel is beginning to crumble. I rejoice in this, **(16)** because soon I will be in my Father’s house [cf. Jn. 14:2].

1617 February 27, [1938]. Today, I went to confession to Father An. [Andrasz] I did as Jesus wanted. After confession, a surge of light filled my soul. Then I heard a voice: **Because you are a child, you shall remain close to My Heart. Your simplicity is more pleasing to Me than your mortifications.**

1618 Father An. [Andrasz’s] words: Live more by faith. Pray that the Divine Mercy become more widely known, and that the work may come into good hands that will manage it well. As for yourself, try to be a good religious here — although things may turn out that way also — but try to be a good religious right here. And now, if you feel those urgings from the Lord and recognize that it is He, follow them. Devote to prayer all the time that is set apart for it, and make your notations afterwards...

1619 **(17)** + The last two days of carnival.²⁴¹ My physical sufferings have intensified. I am uniting myself more closely with the suffering Savior, asking Him for mercy for the whole world, which is running riot in its wickedness. Throughout the day I felt the pain of the crown of thorns. When I lay down, I could not rest my head on the pillow. But at ten o’clock the pains ceased, and I fell asleep; but the next day I felt very exhausted.

1620 + Jesus-Host, if You Yourself did not sustain me, I would not be able to persevere on the cross. I would not be able to endure so much suffering. But the power of Your grace maintains me on a higher level and makes my sufferings meritorious. You give me strength always to move forward

and to gain heaven by force and to have love in my heart for those from whom I suffer adversities and contempt. With Your grace one can do all things.

1621 **(18)** March 1, 1938. One-day Retreat.

In meditation, I learned that I should hide myself as deeply as possible in the Heart of Jesus, meditate upon His Sorrowful Passion, and penetrate into the sentiments of His Divine Heart, which is full of mercy for sinners, In order to obtain mercy for them, I will empty myself at every moment, living by the will of God.

1622 Throughout this Lent, I am a host in Your hand, Jesus. Make use of me so that You may enter into sinners Yourself. Demand anything You like; no sacrifice will seem too much for me when souls are at stake.

1623 + I have offered this whole month's Masses and Holy Communions for the intention of Father Andrasz, that God may give him an even deeper knowledge of His love and mercy.

1624 This month I will practice the three virtues recommended to me by the Mother of God: humility, **(19)** purity and love of God, accepting with profound submission to the will of God everything that He will send me.

1625 March 2, [1938]. I began Holy Lent in the way that Jesus wanted me to, making myself totally dependent upon His holy will and accepting with love everything that He sends me. I cannot practice any greater mortifications, because I am so very weak. This long illness has sapped my strength completely. I am uniting myself with Jesus through suffering. When I meditate on His Painful Passion, my physical sufferings are lessened.

1626 The Lord said to me, **I am taking you into My school for the whole of Lent. I want to teach you how to suffer.** I answered, "With You, Lord, I am ready for everything." And I heard a voice, **You are allowed to drink from the cup from which I drink. I give you that exclusive privilege today...**

1627 **(20)** Today I felt the Passion of Jesus in my whole body, and the Lord gave me knowledge of the conversion of certain souls.

1628 During Holy Mass, I saw Jesus stretched out on the Cross, and He said to me, **My pupil, have great love for those who cause you suffering. Do good to those who hate you.** I answered, “O my Master, You see very well that I feel no love for them, and that troubles me.” Jesus answered, **It is not always within your power to control your feelings. You will recognize that you have love if, after having experienced annoyance and contradiction, you do not lose your peace, but pray for those who have made you suffer and wish them well.** When I returned [...]

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(21) J. M. J.

1629 I am a host in Your hand,
O Jesus, my Creator and Lord,
Silent, hidden, without beauty or charm,
Because all the beauty of my soul is imprinted within me.

I am a host in Your hand, O Divine Priest,
Do with me as You please;
I am totally dependent on Your will, O Lord
Because it is the delight and adornment of my soul.

I am like a white host in Your hand, O God,
I implore You, transform me into Yourself.
May I be wholly hidden in You,
Locked in Your merciful Heart as in Heaven.

I am like a host in Your hand, O Eternal Priest,
May the wafer of my body hide me from human eye;
May Your eye alone measure my love and devotion,
Because my heart is always united with Your Divine Heart.

I am like a sacrificial host in Your hand, O Divine Mediator,
And I burn on the altar of holocaust,
(22) Crushed and ground by suffering like grains of wheat,
And all this for the sake of Your glory, for the salvation of souls.

I am a host abiding in the tabernacle of Your Heart.
I go through life drowned in Your love,

And I fear nothing in the world,
For You Yourself are my shield, my strength, and my defense.

I am a host, laid on the altar of Your Heart,
To burn forever with the fire of love,
For I know that You have lifted me up solely because of Your mercy,
And so I turn all these gifts and graces to Your glory.

I am a host in Your hand, O Judge and Savior.
In the last hour of my life,
May the omnipotence of Your grace lead me to my goal,
May Your compassion on the vessel of mercy become famous.

1630 Jesus, fortify the powers of my soul that the enemy gain nothing.
Without You, I am weakness itself. What am I without Your grace **(23)** if
not an abyss of my own misery? Misery is my possession.

1631 O Wound of Mercy, Heart of Jesus, hide me in Your depths as a drop of
Your own blood, and do not let me out forever! Lock me in Your depths,
and do You Yourself teach me to love You! Eternal Love, do You
Yourself form my soul that it be made capable of returning Your love. O
living Love, enable me to love You forever. I yearn to eternally
reciprocate Your love. O Christ, a single gaze from You is dearer to me
than a thousand worlds, than all heaven itself. Lord, You can make my
soul capable of understanding completely who You are. I know and I
believe that You can do all things; if You have deigned to give Yourself
to me so generously, then I know that You can be even more generous.
Bring me into an intimacy with You so far as it is possible for human
nature to be brought...

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(24) J. M. J.

1632 The desires of my heart are so great and incomprehensible
That nothing can fill the abyss of my heart.
Even the most beautiful things, gathered from all over the world,
Would not for a moment fill Your place for me, O God.

With one glance, I penetrated the whole world,
And I found no other love like the love of my heart.

Therefore I looked into the world of eternity — because this one is too small for me.

My heart has desired the love of the Immortal One.

My heart has sensed that I am a royal child,
That I have found myself in exile, in a foreign land.
I see that the heavenly palace is my home;
Only there will I feel as in my own fatherland.

You Yourself have drawn my soul to You, O Lord;
O Eternal Word, You Yourself have stooped to me,
Giving my soul a deeper knowledge of Yourself.
Behold, the mystery of love for which You have created me!

Pure love has made me strong and brave.
I fear neither the seraphim nor the cherubim, standing with sword in hand,
(25) And I pass over with ease where others tremble,
Because there is nothing to fear, there where love is the guide.

And suddenly the eye of my soul came to rest upon You,
O Lord Jesus Christ, stretched upon the Cross.
Here is my Love, with whom I will rest in my grave,
This is my Bridegroom, my incomprehensible Lord and God.

[Here occurs a bigger space in the Diary.]

1633 **(26)** March 10, [1938]. Continuous physical suffering. I am on the cross with Jesus. On one occasion, M. Superior [Irene] said to me, “It is a lack of love of neighbor on your part, Sister, that you eat something and then you suffer and disturb the others during their night’s rest.” Yet I know for sure that these pains which occur in my intestines are not at all caused by food. The doctor [probably Dr. Silberg] has said the same thing. These sufferings come from the body itself, or rather are a visitation of the Lord. Nevertheless, after that remark I resolved to suffer in secret and not to ask for help, because it is of no avail anyway, since I throw up the medicines that are given to me.

Many a time, I have managed to suffer through attacks that were known only to Jesus. The pains are so violent and severe that they cause me to lose consciousness. When they cause me to faint, and I am drenched in

cold sweat, then they gradually begin to go away. Sometimes they last (27) three hours or more. O my Jesus, may Your holy will be done; I accept everything from Your hand. If I accept the delights and raptures of love to the point of becoming oblivious to what is going on around me, it is only right that I should accept with love these sufferings which cause me to faint.

1634 When the doctor²⁴² came, I could not go down to the parlor to see him, like the other sisters, but asked that he come to my cell, because I could not go down due to a certain difficulty. After a while, he came to the cell and, having examined me, said, "I'll tell everything to the Sister Infirmarian." When the Sister Infirmarian came, after the doctor had left, I told her why I hadn't been able to go down to the parlor, but she gave me to know how very displeased she was. And when I asked, "Sister, what did the doctor say about these pains?" she answered that he had said nothing, that it was nothing, (28) that he had said the patient was just sulking. And with that she went off. Then I said to God, "Christ, give me strength and power to suffer; give to my heart a pure love for this sister." After that, she did not look in on me again for a whole week. But the sufferings returned with great violence and lasted almost the whole night, and it seemed that it would be the end, then and there. The superiors decided to approach another doctor,²⁴³ and he ascertained that my condition was serious and said to me, "It will not be possible to return you to good health. We can remedy your condition partially, but complete recovery is out of question." He prescribed a medicine for the pains, and after I had taken it, the major attacks did not return. "But if you come here, Sister, we will try to patch up your health somehow, if that is still possible." The doctor very much wanted me to go there for a treatment.²⁴⁴

O my Jesus, how strange are Your decrees!

1635 Jesus orders me to write all this (29) for the consolation of other souls who will often be exposed to similar sufferings.

1636 Although I was feeling very weak, I went to see the doctor [Silberg], because that was the superior's will. The sister who was my companion was very unhappy about this. She made this known to me several times and finally said, "What are we going to do? I don't have enough money

to pay for the cab.” I answered nothing. “And what if there is no cab? How are we going to get there? It’s such a long way.” She said this and many other things just to worry me, because our dear superiors had given us enough money for everything, and we didn’t run short. And understanding this whole business within myself, I laughed and told sister that I was not worried one bit: “Let’s trust in God.” But I saw that my deep peace was getting on her nerves, and so I started to pray for her intention.

1637 O my Lord, all this is **(30)** for You and to obtain mercy for poor sinners. When I returned, I was so very tired that I had to lie down right away. But it was the day for the quarterly confession. I tried to go to confession, not only because I had need to do so, but also to ask advice of my spiritual director [Father Andrasz]. I began to prepare myself; however I felt so weak that I decided to go ask Mother Superior [Irene] to allow me to go before the novices. Mother Superior answered, “Go and look for the Directress of Novices [Sister Callista]. If she allows you to go before the novices, it is all right with me.” However, there were only three sisters ahead of me, waiting for confession, and so I waited because I did not have enough strength to go and look for the Directress of Novices. When I went in to make my confession I was feeling so bad that I could not give an account of the condition of my soul; I barely managed to make my confession. At that point, I noted how much the spirit **(31)** is needed; the letter itself does not make love grow [cf. 2 Cor. 3:6].

1638 On that day, there arose some misunderstandings between the Superior and myself. Neither she nor I was to blame, but moral suffering remained, because I could not explain the matter in question, since it was a secret. This was the reason why I suffered, even though, by a single word, I could have revealed the truth.

1639 The 20th [of March]. Today, in spirit, I accompanied a certain dying soul. I obtained trust in God’s mercy for her. The soul was near despair.

1640 This night is known only to You, O Lord. I have offered it for poor obdurate sinners, to obtain Your mercy for them. Scourge me here, burn me here, as long as You give me the souls of sinners, and especially.... O Jesus, with You nothing is lost; take everything and give me souls... sinners.

1641 (32) At adoration during the Forty-Hours' Devotion, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, write that involuntary offenses of souls do not hinder My love for them or prevent Me from uniting Myself with them. But voluntary offenses, even the smallest, obstruct My graces, and I cannot lavish My gifts on such souls.**

1642 + Jesus gave me to know of how everything is dependent on His will, thus giving me profound peace as regards the security of His work.

1643 **Listen, My daughter, although all the works that come into being by My will are exposed to great sufferings, consider whether any of them has been subject to greater difficulties than that work which is directly Mine — the work of Redemption. You should not worry too much about adversities. The world is not as powerful as it seems to be; its strength is strictly limited. (33) Know, My daughter, that if your soul is filled with the fire of My pure love, then all difficulties dissipate like fog before the sun's rays and dare not touch the soul. All adversaries are afraid to start a quarrel with such a soul, because they sense that it is stronger than the whole world...**

1644 **My daughter, do as much for this work of mercy as obedience allows, but present clearly to your confessor the very least of My demands, and he will decide. You must not shirk in any way, but carry out everything faithfully; otherwise, I would find no pleasure in you...**

1645 March 25, 1938. Today, I saw the suffering Lord Jesus. He leaned down toward me and whispered softly, **My daughter, help Me to save sinners.** Suddenly, a burning desire to save souls entered my soul. When I recovered my senses, I knew (34) just how I was to help souls, and I prepared myself for greater sufferings.

1646 + Today [probably Friday, March 25, 1938] my suffering increased; in addition, I felt wounds in my hands, feet and side. I endured this with patience. I sensed the hostility of the enemy of souls, but he did not touch me.

1647 April 1, [1938]. Once again, I am feeling worse today. A high fever is beginning to consume me, and I cannot take any food. I would like to

have something refreshing to drink, but there is not even any water in my pitcher. All this, O Jesus, to obtain mercy for souls.

Just as I was renewing my intention with greater love, one of the novices came in and gave me a big orange which had been sent by the Directress of Novices [Sister Callista]. I saw the Lord's hand in this. The same thing happened again, several times. **(35)** During this time, although my needs were known, I never received anything refreshing to eat, even though I had asked for it. However, I knew that God was demanding suffering and sacrifices. I am not writing in detail about these refusals, because these are delicate matters, and it is difficult to believe. Yet God can demand even such sacrifices.

1648 I was about to ask Mother Superior [Irene] to allow me to have something in my cell with which to quench my great thirst, but before I managed to ask, Mother herself began to speak, "Sister, let's make an end of this illness once and for all, one way or another. You'll have to undergo regular treatment or something. Things can't go on like this any longer." A little later when I was alone I said, "Christ, what am I to do? Am I to ask You for health or for death?" I had no clear command, so I knelt down and said, "May Your holy will be done in my regard. Do with me, Jesus, as You please." **(36)** At that very moment, I felt as though I were all alone, and various temptations attacked me. But I found peace and light in earnest prayer, and I understood that the superior only wished to test me.

1649 I don't know how this happens, but the room in which I have been lying has been very much neglected. Sometimes, it has not been cleaned for more than two weeks. Often, no one would light a fire in the stove, and so my cough would get worse. Sometimes I would ask to have a fire lit, and at other times I did not have the courage to ask. On one occasion, when Mother Superior [Irene] came to see me and asked me if perhaps it was necessary to heat the room more, I said, No, because it was already getting warmer outside, and we had the window open.

1650 First Friday. When I took the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* into my hand and read the account of the canonization of Saint Andrew Bobola, my soul was instantly filled with a great longing **(37)** that our Congregation, too, might have a saint, and I wept like a child that there

was no saint in our midst. And I said to the Lord, "I know Your generosity, and yet it seems to me that You are less generous toward us." And I began again to weep like a little child. And the Lord Jesus said to me, **Don't cry. You are that saint.** Then the light of God inundated my soul, and I was given to know how much I was to suffer, and I said to the Lord, "How will that come about? You have been speaking to me about another Congregation." And the Lord answered, **It is not for you to know how this will come about. Your duty is to be faithful to My grace and to do always what is within your power and what obedience allows you to do...**

1651 + Today one of the sisters came into my room and said that such-and-such a sister was very fussy over her own illness, and that she found this very annoying and would gladly give her a piece of her mind were it not for the fact that she was not a member of this convent. I answered that I was surprised that she should even think in such a way: "Sister, just think of how many sleepless nights this sick sister has been through and of how many tears..." The sister then came to think differently.

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(38) J. M. J.

1652 Adore, my soul, the mercy of the Lord,
O my heart, rejoice wholly in Him,
Because for this you have been chosen by Him,
To spread the glory of His mercy.

His goodness no one has fathomed, no one can measure,
His compassion is untold.
Every soul that approaches Him experiences this.
He will shield her and clasp her to His merciful bosom.

Happy the soul that has trusted in Your goodness
And has abandoned herself completely to Your mercy.
Her soul is filled with the peace of love.
You defend her everywhere as Your own child.

O soul, whoever you may be in this world,
Even if your sins were as black as night,

Do not fear God, weak child that you are,
For great is the power of God's mercy.

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(39) J. M. J.

1653 The light above, where my God reigns,
This it is that my soul yearns for,
This it is for which my heart longs,
And my whole being bounds towards You.

I hasten on to the other world, to God alone,
Into the incomprehensible light, the very fire of love,
For my soul and my heart are created for Him,
And my heart has loved Him from my tender youth.

There, in the resplendent light of Your countenance
My languishing love will rest.
For Your virgin agonizes for You in her exile,
For she lives only when united with You.

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J. M. J.

My day is drawing to a close,
Even now I glimpse the refulgence of Your light, O my God.
No one shall learn of what my heart is feeling;
My lips shall fall silent in great humility.

(40) Even now, I draw nigh to the eternal nuptials,
To heaven unending, to spaces without limit.
I long for no repose or reward;
The pure love of God draws me to heaven.

Even now, I go to meet You, eternal Love
With a heart languishing in its desire for You.
I feel that Your pure love, Lord, dwells in my heart,
And I sense my eternal destiny in heaven.

Even now, I go to my Father, in heaven eternal,

From the land of exile, from this vale of tears,
The earth can no longer hold back my pure heart,
And the heights of heaven have drawn me close.

I go, O my Bridegroom, I go to see Your glory,
Which even now fills my soul with joy
There where all heaven is plunged in Your adoration,
I feel that my worship is pleasing to You, nothingness though I am.

In eternal happiness, I will not forget those on earth,
I will obtain God's mercy for all,
(41) And I will remember especially those who were dear to my heart,
And the deepest absorption in God will not allow me to forget them.

In these last moments I know not how to converse with others.
In silence I await only You, O Lord.
I know the time will come when all will understand the work of God in
my soul.
I know that such is Your will. — So be it.

+

1654 J. M. J.

O truth, O thorny life,
In order to pass through you victoriously
It is necessary to lean on You, O Christ,
And to be always close to You.

I would not know how to suffer without You, O Christ.
Of myself I would not be able to brave adversities.
Alone, I would not have the courage to drink from Your cup;
But You, Lord, are always with me, and You lead me along mysterious
paths.

A weak child, I have begun the battle in Your Name.
I have fought bravely, though often without success,
(42) And I know that my efforts have pleased You,
And I know that it is the effort alone which You eternally reward.

O truth, O life-and-death struggle,

When I rose to do battle, an inexperienced knight,
I felt I had a knight's blood, though still a child,
And therefore, O Christ, I needed Your help and protection.

My heart will not rest from its efforts and struggle
Until You Yourself call me from the field of battle.
I will stand before You, not to receive a reward,
But to be drowned in You, in peace forever.

1655 + O Christ, if my soul had known, all at once, what it was going to have to suffer during its lifetime, it would have died of terror at the very sight; it would not have touched its lips to the cup of bitterness. But as it has been given to drink a drop at a time, it has emptied the cup to the very bottom. O Christ, if You Yourself did not support the soul, how much could it do of itself? We are strong, but with Your strength; we are holy, but with Your holiness. And of ourselves, what are we? — less than nothing...

(43) + My Jesus, You suffice me for everything else in the world. Although the sufferings are severe, You sustain me. Although the times of loneliness are terrible, You make them sweet for me. Although the weakness is great, You change it into power for me.

1656 I do not know how to describe all that I suffer, and what I have written thus far is merely a drop. There are moments of suffering about which I really cannot write. But there are also moments in my life when my lips are silent, and there are no words for my defense, and I submit myself completely to the will of God; then the Lord Himself defends me and makes claims on my behalf, and His demands are such that they can be noticed exteriorly. Nevertheless, when I perceive His major interventions, which manifest themselves by way of punishment, then I beg Him earnestly for mercy and forgiveness. Yet I am not always heard. The Lord acts toward me in a mysterious manner. There are times when He Himself allows terrible sufferings, and then again there are times when He does not let me suffer and removes everything **(44)** that might afflict my soul. These are His ways, unfathomable and incomprehensible to us. It is for us to submit ourselves completely to His holy will. There are mysteries that the human mind will never fathom here on earth; eternity will reveal them.

1657 April 10, 1938. Palm Sunday. I attended Holy Mass, but did not have the strength to go and get the palm.²⁴⁵ I felt so weak that I barely made it till the end of Mass. During Mass, Jesus gave me to know the pain of His soul, and I could clearly feel how the hymns of *Hosanna* reverberated as a painful echo in His Sacred Heart. My soul, too, was inundated by a sea of bitterness, and each *Hosanna* pierced my own heart to its depths. My whole soul was drawn close to Jesus. I heard Jesus' voice: **My daughter, your compassion for Me refreshes Me. By meditating on My Passion, your soul acquires a distinct beauty.**

1658 (45) I received Holy Communion upstairs, for there was no question of my going down to the chapel since I was exhausted because of intense sweating, and when that passed, I had a fever and chills. I felt completely worn out. Today, one of the Jesuit Fathers [Father Zukowicz²⁴⁶] brought us Holy Communion. He gave the Lord to three other sisters and then to me; and thinking I was the last, he gave me two Hosts. But one of the novices was lying in bed in the next cell, and there was no Host left for her. The priest went back again and brought her the Lord, but Jesus told me, **I enter that heart unwillingly. You received those two Hosts, because I delayed My coming into this soul who resists My grace. My visit to such a soul is not pleasant for Me.** At that point, my soul was drawn close to Him, and I received a deep inner light which gave me to understand, in spirit, all the workings of mercy. It was like a flash of lightning, but more distinct than if I had watched it for hours with the eyes of my body.

1659 (46) Still, in order to write anything at all, I must make use of words, though they cannot render all of what my soul enjoyed on seeing the glory of God's mercy. The glory of the Divine Mercy is resounding, even now, in spite of the efforts of its enemies and of Satan himself, who has a great hatred for God's mercy. This work will snatch a great number of souls from him, and that is why the spirit of darkness sometimes tempts good people violently, so that they may hinder the work. But I have clearly seen that the will of God is already being carried out, and that it will be accomplished to the very last detail. The enemy's greatest efforts will not thwart the smallest detail of what the Lord has decreed. No matter if there are times when the work seems to be completely destroyed; it is then that the work is being all the more consolidated.

1660 My soul was filled with a peace much deeper than anything I had experienced before, a divine reassurance which nothing can efface, a deep peace which nothing can disturb, even though I were to go through the severest of ordeals. **(47)** I am at peace; God Himself governs all things.

1661 I spent the whole day in thanksgiving, and gratitude kept flooding my soul. O my God, how good You are, how great is Your mercy! You visit me with so many graces, me who am a most wretched speck of dust. Prostrating myself at Your feet, O Lord, I confess with a sincere heart that I have done nothing to deserve even the least of Your graces. It is in Your infinite goodness that You give Yourself to me so generously. Therefore, the greater the graces which my heart receives, the deeper it plunges itself in humility.

1662 + O Christ, suffering for You is the delight of my heart and my soul. Prolong my sufferings to infinity, that I may give You a proof of my love. I accept everything that Your hand will hold out to me. Your love, Jesus, is enough for me. I will glorify You in abandonment and darkness, in agony and fear, **(48)** in pain and bitterness, in anguish of spirit and grief of heart. In all things may You be blessed. My heart is so detached from the earth, that You Yourself are enough for me. There is no longer any moment in my life for self concern.

1663 Holy Thursday [April 14, 1938]. Today I felt strong enough to take part in the ceremonies of the Church. During Holy Mass, Jesus stood before me and said, **Look into My Heart and see there the love and mercy which I have for humankind, and especially for sinners. Look, and enter into My Passion.** In an instant, I experienced and lived through the whole Passion of Jesus in my own heart. I was surprised that these tortures did not deprive me of my life.

1664 During adoration, Jesus said to me, **My daughter, know that your ardent love and the compassion you have for Me were a consolation to Me in the Garden** [of Olives].

1665 **(49)** During Holy Hour in the evening, I heard the words, **You see My mercy for sinners, which at this moment is revealing itself in all its power. See how little you have written about it; it is only a single**

drop. Do what is in your power, so that sinners may come to know My goodness.

1666 Good Friday [April 15, 1938] I saw the Lord Jesus, tortured, but not nailed to the Cross. It was still before the crucifixion, and He said to me, **You are My Heart. Speak to sinners about My mercy.** And the Lord gave me interior knowledge of the whole abyss of His mercy for souls, and I learned that that which I had written is truly a drop.

1667 Holy Saturday [April 16, 1938]. During adoration, the Lord said to me, **Be at peace, My daughter. This Work of mercy is Mine; there is nothing of you in it. It pleases Me that you are carrying out faithfully what I have commanded you to do, not adding or taking away a single word.** And He gave me an interior light by (50) which I learned that not a single word was mine; despite difficulties and adversities, I have always, always, fulfilled His will, as He has made it known to me.

1668 The Resurrection. Before the Mass of the Resurrection, I felt so weak that I lost all hope of participating in the procession which takes place in the church; and I said to the Lord, “Jesus, if my prayers are pleasing to You, give me the strength for this moment that I may take part in the procession.” At that same instant, I felt strong and certain that I could go along with the sisters in the procession.

1669 When the procession began, I saw Jesus in a brightness greater than the light of the sun. Jesus looked at me with love and said, **Heart of My Heart, be filled with joy.** At that moment my spirit was drowned in Him... When I came to myself, I was walking along in the procession with the sisters, while my soul was totally immersed in Him...

1670 (51) + Easter [April 17, 1938]. During Mass, I thanked the Lord Jesus for having deigned to redeem us and for having given us that greatest of all gifts; namely, His love in Holy Communion; that is, His very own Self. At that moment, I was drawn into the bosom of the Most Holy Trinity, and I was immersed in the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These moments are hard to describe.

1671 At that moment, I prayed to the Lord for a certain person, and the Lord answered me, **This soul is particularly dear to Me.** I was immensely

happy with this. The happiness of other souls fills me with a new joy, and when I see the higher gifts in some soul, my heart soars up to the Lord in a new hymn of adoration.

1672 April 19, [1938]. During recreation, one of the sisters [Sister Cajetan] said, "Sister Faustina is doing so poorly that she can hardly walk, but may she die soon because she is going to be a saint." Then one of the sister directresses [Sister Casimir²⁴⁷] said, "That she is going to die, we know; but whether she is going to be a saint, that is another question." There then began some malicious remarks (52) on this subject. I kept silent; then I put in a word, but I saw that the conversation was getting worse, so again I fell silent.

1673 At present, I am getting letters from sisters who are in other houses and who made their novitiate with me.²⁴⁸ They often amuse me and make me laugh, as they usually go something like this: "Dear Sister Faustina, we are very sorry that you are so gravely ill; but we are very happy that, when the Lord Jesus takes you away, you will pray for us, for you have a lot of influence with the Lord." One of the sisters put it this way: "When you die, Sister, please take me under your special care, for certainly you can do that for me." Another sister wrote as follows: "How I am waiting for the time when the Lord Jesus will take you, because I know what will happen then; and I greatly desire death for you." I did want to ask her what she was thinking of, concerning my death, (53) but I mortified myself and answered, "The same thing will happen to me, a sinner, as happens to all sinners, if God's mercy does not shield me."

1674 April 20, [1938]. Departure for Pradnik. I was very worried that I would be put in bed in a ward and be exposed to all sorts of things. If it were to be for only a week or two... but it is for such a long time, two months or perhaps more. In the evening, I went in for a long talk with the Lord Jesus. When I saw the Lord Jesus, I poured out my whole heart before Him, all my troubles, fears and apprehensions. Jesus lovingly listened to me and then said, **Be at peace, My child, I am with you. Go in great peace. All is ready; I have ordered, in My own special way, a private room to be prepared for you.** Reassured and overwhelmed with gratitude, I went to bed.

1675 On the following day, Sister Felicia took me there. I left in great peace

and a calm spirit. **(54)** When we arrived, they told us there was a private room for Sister Faustina. When we entered the room, we were surprised that everything had been prepared so beautifully: all was clean and neat, covered with tablecloths and bedecked with flowers; a pretty Easter Lamb had been placed on the night table by the Sisters.²⁴⁹

At once, three Sacred Heart Sisters²⁵⁰ who work at the sanatorium, my old acquaintances, came and greeted me warmly. Sister Felicia was surprised at all this. We bid a warm farewell to each other, and she left. When I was alone, with just the Lord Jesus and myself, I thanked Him for this great grace.

1676 Jesus said to me, **Be at peace; I am with you.** Tired, I fell asleep. In the evening, the sister [Sister David] who was to look after me came and said, “Tomorrow you will not receive the Lord Jesus, Sister, because you are very tired; later on, we shall see.” This hurt me very much, but I said with great calmness, “Very well,” and, resigning myself totally **(55)** to the will of the Lord, I tried to sleep. In the morning, I made my meditation and prepared for Holy Communion, even though I was not to receive the Lord Jesus. When my love and desire had reached a high degree, I saw at my bedside a Seraph, who gave me Holy Communion,²⁵¹ saying these words: “Behold the Lord of Angels.” When I received the Lord, my spirit was drowned in the love of God and in amazement. This was repeated for thirteen days, although I was never sure he would bring me Holy Communion the next day. Yet, I put my trust completely in the goodness of God, but did not even dare to think that I would receive Holy Communion in this way on the following day.

The Seraph was surrounded by a great light, the divinity and love of God being reflected in him. He wore a golden robe and, over it, a transparent surplice and a transparent stole. The chalice was crystal, covered with a transparent veil. As soon as he gave me the Lord, he disappeared.

1677 Once, when a certain doubt rose within me shortly before Holy Communion, **(56)** the Seraph with the Lord Jesus stood before me again. I asked the Lord Jesus, and not receiving an answer, I said to the Seraph, “Could you perhaps hear my confession?” And he answered me, “No spirit in heaven has that power.” And at that moment, the Sacred Host rested on my lips.

1678 On Sunday [April 24, 1938²⁵²], the sister who had charge of the sick said to me, “Well, Sister, the priest will bring you the Lord Jesus today.” I answered, “Good,” and he brought Him. After some time, I received permission to leave my bed. So I went to Holy Mass and to spend time with the Lord, regularly.

1679 After the first examination, the doctor [Silberg] found that my condition was grave. “We suspect, Sister, that you do have the illness about which you spoke to me But Almighty God can do all things.”

When I entered my room, I steeped myself in prayer of thanksgiving for everything the Lord had been sending me throughout my whole life, surrendering myself totally to His most holy will. **(57)** A deep joy and peace flooded my soul. I felt a peace so great that, if death had come at that moment, I would not have said to it, “Wait, for I still have some matters to attend to.” No, I would have welcomed it with joy, because I am ready for the meeting with the Lord, not only today, but ever since the moment when I placed my complete trust in the Divine Mercy, resigning myself totally to His most holy will, full of mercy and compassion. I know what I am of myself...

1680 Low Sunday. Today, I again offered myself to the Lord as a holocaust for sinners. My Jesus, if the end of my life is already approaching, I beg You most humbly, accept my death in union with You as a holocaust which I offer You today, while I still have full possession of my faculties and a fully conscious will, and this for a threefold purpose:

Firstly: that the work of Your mercy may spread throughout the whole world and that the Feast of The Divine Mercy may be solemnly promulgated and celebrated.

(58) Secondly: that sinners, especially dying sinners, may have recourse to Your mercy and experience the unspeakable effects of this mercy.

Thirdly: that all the work of Your mercy may be realized according to Your wishes, and for a certain person who is in charge of this work...

Accept, most merciful Jesus, this, my inadequate sacrifice, which I offer to You today before heaven and earth. May Your Most Sacred Heart, so full of mercy, complete what is lacking in my offering, and offer it to

Your Father for the conversion of sinners. I thirst after souls, O Christ.

1681 + At that moment, the light of God penetrated my being, and I felt that I was God's exclusive property; and I experienced the greatest spiritual freedom, of which I had had no previous idea. And at the same time, I saw the glory of The Divine Mercy and an infinite multitude of souls who were praising His goodness. My soul was completely drowned in God, and I heard the words, **You are My well-beloved daughter**. The vivid presence of God continued throughout the whole day.

1682 (59) + May 1, [1938]. This evening, Jesus said to me, **My daughter, do you need anything?** I answered, "O my Love, when I have You I have everything." And the Lord answered, **If souls would put themselves completely in My care, I Myself would undertake the task of sanctifying them, and I would lavish even greater graces on them. There are souls who thwart My efforts, but I have not given up on them; as often as they turn to Me, I hurry to their aid, shielding them with My mercy, and I give them the first place in My compassionate Heart.**

1683 **Write for the benefit of religious souls that it delights Me to come to their hearts in Holy Communion. But if there is anyone else in such a heart, I cannot bear it and quickly leave that heart, taking with Me all the gifts and graces I have prepared for the soul. And the soul does not even notice My going. After some time, inner emptiness and dissatisfaction will come to her attention. Oh, if only she would turn to Me then, (60) I would help her to cleanse her heart, and I would fulfill everything in her soul; but without her knowledge and consent, I cannot be the Master of her heart.**

1684 + I often communicate with persons who are dying and obtain the divine mercy for them. Oh, how great is the goodness of God, greater than we can understand. There are moments and there are mysteries of the divine mercy over which the heavens are astounded. Let our judgment of souls cease, for God's mercy upon them is extraordinary.

1685 (61) During Holy Hour today, I asked the Lord Jesus if He would deign to teach me about the spiritual life, Jesus answered me, **My daughter, faithfully live up to the words which I speak to you. Do not value any**

external thing too highly, even if it were to seem very precious to you. Let go of yourself, and abide with Me continually. Entrust everything to Me and do nothing on your own, and you will always have great freedom of spirit. No circumstances or events will ever be able to upset you. Set little store on what people say. Let everyone judge you as they like. Do not make excuses for yourself, it will do you no harm. Give away everything at the first sign of a demand, even if they were the most necessary things. Do not ask for anything without consulting Me. Allow them to take away even what is due you — respect, your good name — let your spirit rise above all that. And so, set free from everything, rest close to My Heart, not allowing your peace to be disturbed by anything. My pupil, consider (62) the words which I have spoken to you.

1686 O my Love, my eternal Master, how good it is to obey; because when obedience infuses the soul, it brings with it power and strength to act.

1687 Today I saw the Crucified Lord Jesus. Precious pearls and diamonds were pouring forth from the wound in His Heart. I saw how a multitude of souls was gathering these gifts, but there was one soul who was closest to His Heart and she, knowing the greatness of these gifts, was gathering them with liberality, not only for herself, but for others as well. The Savior said to me, **Behold, the treasures of grace that flow down upon souls, but not all souls know how to take advantage of My generosity.**

1688 Today, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, look into My Merciful Heart and reflect its compassion in your own heart and in your deeds, so that you, who proclaim My mercy to the world, may yourself be aflame with it.**

1689 (63) May 8, [1938]. Today, I saw two enormous pillars implanted in the ground; I had implanted one of them, and a certain person, S.M., the other. We had done so with unheard-of effort, much fatigue and difficulty. And when I had implanted the pillar, I myself wondered where such extraordinary strength had come from, And I recognized that I had not done this by my own strength, but with the power which came from above. These two pillars were close to each other, in the area of the image. And I saw the image, raised up very high and hanging from these two pillars. In an instant, there stood a large temple, supported both from

within and from without, upon these two pillars. I saw a hand finishing the temple, but I did not see the person. There was a great multitude of people, inside and outside the temple, and the torrents issuing from the Compassionate Heart of Jesus were flowing down upon everyone.

1690 After Holy Communion today, Jesus said, **My daughter give Me souls. Know that it is your mission (64) to win souls for Me by prayer and sacrifice, and by encouraging them to trust in My mercy.**

1691 Oh, how greatly I desire the glory of Your mercy — for me, bitterness and suffering! When I see the glory of Your mercy, I am immeasurably happy. Let all disgrace, humiliation and abasement come down upon me, as long as the glory and praise of Your mercy resounds everywhere — that's all that matters.

The Creator and The Creature.

1692 I adore You, Lord and Creator, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament. I adore You for all the works of Your hands, that reveal to me so much wisdom, goodness and mercy, O Lord. You have spread so much beauty over the earth, and it tells me about Your beauty, even though these beautiful things are but a faint reflection of You, Incomprehensible Beauty. And although You have hidden Yourself and concealed Your beauty, my eye, **(65)** enlightened by faith, reaches You, and my soul recognizes its Creator, its Highest Good; and my heart is completely immersed in prayer of adoration.

My Lord and Creator, Your goodness encourages me to converse with You. Your mercy abolishes the chasm which separates the Creator from the creature. To converse with You, O Lord, is the delight of my heart. In You I find everything that my heart could desire. Here Your light illumines my mind, enabling it to know You more and more deeply. Here streams of graces flow down upon my heart. Here my soul draws eternal life. O my Lord and Creator, You alone, beyond all these gifts, give Your own Self to me and unite Yourself intimately with Your miserable creature. Here, without searching for words, our hearts understand each other. Here, no one is able to interrupt our conversation. What I talk to You about, Jesus, is our secret, which creatures **(66)** shall not know and Angels dare not ask about. These are secret acts of forgiveness, known

only to Jesus and me; this is the mystery of His mercy, which embraces each soul separately. For this incomprehensible goodness of Yours, I adore You, O Lord and Creator, with all my heart and all my soul. And, although my worship is so little and poor, I am at peace because I know that You know it is sincere, however inadequate...

1693 As I was writing the above words, I saw the Lord Jesus leaning over me, and He asked, **My daughter, what are you writing?** I answered, "I am writing about You, Jesus, about Your being hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, about Your inconceivable love and mercy for people." And Jesus said, **Secretary of My most profound mystery, know that yours is an exclusive intimacy with Me. Your task is to write down everything that I make known to you about My mercy, for the benefit of those who by (67) reading these things will be comforted in their souls and will have the courage to approach Me. I therefore want you to devote all your free moments to writing.** "But, O Lord, shall I always have a moment, at least a brief one, in which to write?" And Jesus answered, **It is not for you to think about that. Only do as much as you can, and I will always arrange things so that you will easily be able to do what I ask of you...**

1694 Today, I was visited by a certain lay person [probably Stanisława Kwietniewska] who has caused me a lot of sorrow and who has abused my goodness, telling many lies. At the first moment I saw her, the blood froze in my veins, because there stood before my eyes all that I had to suffer because of her, although with one word I could have freed myself of them all. And the thought came to me to tell her the truth, firmly and immediately. But at the same moment, the mercy **(68)** of God came before my eyes, and I resolved to act toward her as Jesus would have acted in my place. I started to talk to her gently, and when she expressed the wish to talk to me alone, I then, in a very delicate manner, made known to her clearly the sad condition of her soul. I saw that she was deeply moved, though she was trying to hide this from me. At that point, a third person came in, and so our heart-to-heart talk came to an end. She asked me for a glass of water and for two other things which I did willingly. However, had it not been for the grace of God, I would not have been able to act in such a way toward her. When they left, I thanked God for the grace which had supported me during that time.

1695 Then I heard the words, **I am glad you behaved like My true daughter. Be always merciful as I am merciful. Love everyone out of love for Me, even your greatest enemies, so that My mercy may be fully reflected (69) in your heart.**

1696 O Christ, although much effort is required, all things can be done with Your grace.

1697 I was feeling fairly well today, and I was glad that I would be able to make the Holy Hour. But when I began to make the Holy Hour, my physical sufferings intensified, so that I was not able to pray. When the Holy Hour was over, my sufferings came to an end, and I complained to the Lord that I had wanted so much to steep myself in His sorrowful Passion, but that my sufferings had not allowed me to do so. Then Jesus said to me, **My daughter, know that if I allow you to feel and have a more profound knowledge of My sufferings, that is a grace from Me. But when your mind is dimmed and your sufferings are great, it is then that you take an active part in My Passion, and I am conforming you more fully to Myself. It is your task to submit yourself to My will at such times, more than at others...**

1698 **(70)** I often attend upon the dying and through entreaties obtain for them trust in God's mercy, and I implore God for an abundance of divine grace, which is always victorious. God's mercy sometimes touches the sinner at the last moment in a wondrous and mysterious way. Outwardly, it seems as if everything were lost, but it is not so. The soul, illumined by a ray of God's powerful final grace, turns to God in the last moment with such a power of love that, in an instant, it receives from God forgiveness of sin and punishment, while outwardly it shows no sign either of repentance or of contrition, because souls [at that stage] no longer react to external things. Oh, how beyond comprehension is God's mercy! But — horror! — there are also souls who voluntarily and consciously reject and scorn this grace! Although a person is at the point of death, the merciful God gives the soul that interior vivid moment, so that if the soul is willing, it has the possibility of returning to God. But sometimes, the obduracy **(71)** in souls is so great that consciously they choose hell; they [thus] make useless all the prayers that other souls offer to God for them and even the efforts of God Himself...

+
1699 J. M. J.

Solitude — my favorite moments,
Solitude — but always with You, Jesus and Lord,
Close to Your Heart, time passes pleasantly for me,
And, close to Him, my soul finds its repose.

When the heart is filled with You and overflowing with love,
And the soul burns with pure fire,
Then, amidst the utmost desolation, the soul will not experience
loneliness,
Because it rests on Your bosom.

O Solitude — moments of supreme companionship,
Though I be abandoned by all creatures,
I immerse myself totally in the ocean of Your Godhead,
And You listen sweetly to my confidences.

1700 **(72)** This evening, the Lord asked me, **Do you not have any desires in your heart?** I answered, “I have one great desire, and it is to be united with You forever.” And the Lord answered me, **That will happen soon. My dearest child, your every stirring is reflected in My Heart. My gaze rests kindly upon you before any other creature.**

1701 I asked the Lord today that He might deign to teach me about the interior life, because of myself I can neither understand nor conceive anything perfectly. The Lord answered me, **I was your Teacher, I am and I will be; strive to make your heart like unto My humble and gentle Heart. Never claim your rights. Bear with great calm and patience everything that befalls you. Do not defend yourself when you are put to shame, though innocent. Let others triumph. Do not stop (73) being good when you notice that your goodness is being abused. I Myself will speak up for you when it is necessary. Be grateful for the smallest of My graces, because your gratitude compels Me to grant you new graces...**

1702 Towards the end of the Way of the Cross which I was making, the Lord Jesus began to complain about the souls of religious and priests, about the

lack of love in chosen souls. **I will allow convents and churches to be destroyed.** I answered, “Jesus, but there are so many souls praising You in convents.” The Lord answered, **That praise wounds My Heart, because love has been banished from convents. Souls without love and without devotion, souls full of egoism and self-love, souls full of pride and arrogance, souls full of deceit and hypocrisy, lukewarm souls who have just enough warmth to keep them alive: My Heart cannot bear this. (74) All the graces that I pour out upon them flow off them as off the face of a rock. I cannot stand them, because they are neither good or bad. I called convents into being to sanctify the world through them. It is from them that a powerful flame of love and sacrifice should burst forth. And if they do not repent and become enkindled by their first love, I will deliver them over to the fate of this world...**

How can they sit on the promised throne of judgment to judge the world, when their guilt is greater than the guilt of the world? There is neither penance nor atonement. O heart, which received Me in the morning and at noon are all ablaze with hatred against Me, hatred of all sorts! O heart specially chosen by Me, were you chosen for this, to give Me more pain? The great sins of the world are superficial wounds on My Heart, but the sins of a chosen soul pierce My Heart through and through...

1703 When I tried to intercede for them, I could find nothing with which (75) to excuse them and, being at the time unable to think of anything in their defense, my heart was seized with pain, and I wept bitterly. Then the Lord looked at me kindly and comforted me with these words: **Do not cry. There are still a great number of souls who love Me very much, but My Heart desires to be loved by all and, because My love is great, that is why I warn and chastise them.**

1704 + Struggle with a certain temptation. There was a person who kept accosting me with flattering words, and since he knew when I went out to go to the chapel or to the veranda, he would bar my way. Since he did not dare approach me by himself, he found another person like himself, but neither of them dared approach. As I was on my way to the May devotions, they were already standing there where I had to pass. I hadn't

yet reached them when I heard enticing words, (76) directed at me. And the Lord permitted me to know the intentions of their hearts, which were not good. I felt they would block my way after the service, and then I would have to talk to them, for up to that time I hadn't said a word.

When I left the chapel, they were there, armed and waiting for me to pass. This time, I was overcome with fear. Then Jesus stood by me and said, **Do not fear. I am with you.** Then I felt an extraordinary strength in my soul, which I cannot describe and, being a few steps from them, I said boldly and loudly, "Praised be Jesus Christ." And they, stepping aside, responded, "For ever and ever. Amen." As if struck by lightning, they bowed their heads, not even daring to look at me. After I had passed, I could hear some malicious comments. Ever since that time, when this person sees me, he runs away in order not to meet me and I, thanks to the Lord, have been left in peace...

1705 (77) After Holy Mass, I went out to the garden to make my meditation, since there were not yet any patients in the garden at this time, and so I felt at ease. As I was meditating on the blessings of God, my heart was burning with a love so strong that it seemed my breast would burst. Suddenly Jesus stood before me and said, **What are you doing here so early?** I answered, "I am thinking of You, of Your mercy and Your goodness toward us. And You, Jesus, what are You doing here?" **I have come out to meet you, to lavish new graces on you. I am looking for souls who would like to receive My grace.**

1706 During Vespers today, the Lord gave me to know how very pleased He is with a pure and free heart. I felt that it is God's delight to look into such a heart... But such hearts are knightly hearts; their life is a constant battle...

1707 (78) + On my way to the veranda, I went into the chapel for a moment. My heart was plunged in profound adoration, praising God's incomprehensible goodness and His mercy. Then I heard these words in my soul: **I am and will be for you such as you praise Me for being. You shall experience My goodness, already in this life and then, to the full, in the life to come.**

1708 O Christ, I am most delighted when I see that You are loved, and that

Your praise and glory resound, especially the praise of Your mercy. O Christ, to the last moment of my life, I will not stop glorifying Your goodness and mercy. With every drop of my blood, with every beat of my heart, I glorify Your mercy. I long to be entirely transformed into a hymn of Your glory. When I find myself on my deathbed, may the last beat of my heart be a loving hymn in praise of Your unfathomable mercy.

1709 **(79)** + Today the Lord said to me, **You shall make a three-day retreat before the coming of the Holy Spirit. I Myself will direct you. You shall not follow any of the rules required for retreats or use any books for meditation. Your task is to listen attentively to My words. For spiritual reading you shall read one chapter from the Gospel of St. John.**

[Here occurs a space of a half page in the original Notebook]

1710 **(80)** May 26, [1938 — Feast of the Ascension]. Today I accompanied the Lord Jesus as He ascended into heaven. It was about noon. I was overcome by a great longing for God. It is a strange thing, the more I felt God's presence, the more ardently I desired Him. Then I saw myself in the midst of a huge crowd of disciples and apostles, together with the Mother of God. Jesus was telling them to... **Go out into the whole world and teach in My name.** He stretched out His hands and blessed them and disappeared in a cloud. I saw the longing of Our Lady. Her soul yearned for Jesus with the whole force of Her love. But She was so peaceful and so united to the will of God that there was not a stir in Her heart but for what God wanted.

1711 When I was left alone with the Blessed Virgin, She instructed me concerning the interior life. She said, *The soul's true greatness is in loving God and in humbling oneself in His presence, completely forgetting oneself and believing oneself to be nothing, because the Lord is great, but He is well-pleased only with the humble, He always opposes the proud.*

1712 **(81)** A certain person whom I have mentioned before visited me again. When I saw that she was beginning to get entangled in her own lies, I let her know that I knew she was lying. She became very embarrassed and stopped speaking. Then I spoke to her about the great judgments of God,

and I also remarked that she was leading innocent souls astray and along dangerous roads. I uncovered before her everything that was in her heart. Since I had to overcome my own feelings in order to talk to her, to prove to Jesus that I love my enemies, I gave her my afternoon snack. She went away enlightened in soul, but action is still far away...

1713 There are times when the Lord Jesus fulfills my smallest wishes. Today I remarked that I would like to see some ears of grain, but that they cannot be seen from our sanatorium. However, one of the patients heard this remark and, on the following day, he went out into the field and brought me several beautiful **(82)** ears of grain. My room is always adorned with fresh flowers, but my spirit finds satisfaction in nothing. More and more, I yearn for God.

1714 Today I interceded earnestly with the Lord Jesus for our house, that He might deign to take away the cross which has touched our convent.²⁵³ The Lord answered me, Your prayers are accepted for other intentions. I cannot take away this cross until they recognize its meaning. Nevertheless, I did not stop praying.

1715 A strong temptation. The Lord gave me to know how pleasing a pure heart is to Him, and thereby I was given a deeper knowledge of my own misery. When I began to prepare for confession, strong temptations against confessors assaulted me. I did not see Satan, but I could sense him, his terrible anger. — “Yes, he’s an ordinary man.” — “Not ordinary, because he has the power of God.” — Yes, **(83)** it is not difficult for me to accuse myself of my sins. But to uncover the most secret depths of my heart, to give an account of the action of God’s grace, to speak about God’s every demand, about all that goes on between God and myself... to tell that to a man is beyond my strength. I felt I was fighting against the powers and I cried out: “O Christ, You and the priest are one; I will approach confession as if I were approaching, not a man, but You.” When I entered the confessional, I began by disclosing my difficulties. The priest replied that the best thing I could have done was to disclose these temptations from the outset. However, after the confession, they took flight, and my soul is enjoying peace.

1716 Once during recreation, one of the sister directresses said that the lay sisters were without feelings, and so could be treated stiffly. I was sorry

to see that the sister directresses know so little about the lay sisters and judge them only from appearances.

1717 **(84)** Today, I was talking with the Lord, and He said to me, **There are souls with whom I can do nothing. They are souls that are continuously observing others, but know nothing of what is going on within their own selves. They talk about others continually, even during times of grand silence, which is reserved for speaking only with Me. Poor souls, they do not hear My words; their interior remains empty. They do not look for Me within their own hearts, but in idle talk, where I am never to be found. They sense their emptiness, but they do not recognize their own guilt, while souls in whom I reign completely are a constant source of remorse to them. Instead of correcting themselves, their hearts swell with envy, and if they do not come to their senses, they plunge in even deeper. A heart, which thus far is envious, now begins to be filled with hate. And they are already at the edge of the precipice. They are jealous of my gifts in other souls, but they themselves are unable and unwilling to accept them.**

1718 **(85)** To stay at Your feet, O hidden God,
Is the delight and paradise of my soul.
Here, You give me to know You, O incomprehensible One,
And You speak to me sweetly: **Give Me, give Me your heart.**

Silent conversation, alone with You,
Is to experience what heavenly beings enjoy,
And to say to God, "I will, I will give You my heart, O Lord,"
While You, O great and incomprehensible One, accept it graciously.

Love and sweetness are my soul's life,
And Your unceasing presence in my soul.
I live on earth in constant rapture,
And like a Seraph I repeat, "Hosanna!"

O You Who are hidden, body, soul and divinity,
Under the fragile form of bread,
You are my life from Whom springs an abundance of graces;
And, for me, You surpass the delights of heaven.

When You unite Yourself with me in Communion, O God,
I then feel my unspeakable greatness,
(86) A greatness which flows from You, O Lord, I humbly confess,
And despite my misery, with Your help, I can become a saint.

1719 + During Holy Mass, I came to know that a certain priest does not effect much in souls because he thinks about himself and so is alone. God's grace takes flight; he relies on trifling external things, which have no importance in the eyes of God; and, being proud, he fritters away his time, wearing himself out to no purpose.

1720 There are moments when Jesus gives me knowledge within my soul, and then everything that exists on earth is at my service: friends, enemies, success, adversity... all things, willing or not, must serve me. I do not think of them at all; I strive to be faithful to God and to love Him to the point of complete forgetfulness of self. And He Himself looks after me and fights against my enemies.

1721 **(87)** After Holy Communion, when I had welcomed Jesus into my heart, I said to Him, "My Love, reign in the most secret recesses of my heart, there where my most secret thoughts are conceived, where You alone have free access, in this deepest sanctuary where human thought cannot penetrate. May You alone dwell there, and may everything I do exteriorly take its origin in You. I ardently desire, and I am striving with all the strength of my soul, to make You, Lord, feel at home in this sanctuary."

1722 I heard these words: **If you did not tie My hands, I would send down many punishments upon the earth. My daughter, your look disarms My anger. Although your lips are silent, you call out to Me so mightily that all heaven is moved. I cannot escape from your requests, because you pursue Me, not from afar but within your own heart.**

1723 **(88)** When the soul of a certain young lady came to me one night, she made me aware of her presence, and made known to me that she needed my prayer. I prayed for a while, but her spirit did not leave me. Then I thought to myself, "If you are a good spirit, leave me in peace, and the indulgences I will gain tomorrow will be for you." At that moment, the

spirit left my room, and I recognized that she was in purgatory.

1724 Today I felt the Lord's Passion in my body more than at any other time. I felt this was for the sake of a dying soul.

1725 Today, the Lord has been teaching me, once again, how I am to approach the Sacrament of Penance: **My daughter, just as you prepare in My presence, so also you make your confession before Me. The person of the priest is, for Me, only a screen. Never analyze what sort of a (89) priest it is that I am making use of; open your soul in confession as you would to Me, and I will fill it with My light.**

1726 Christ and Lord, You are leading me over such precipices that, when I look at them, I am filled with fright, but at the same time I am at peace as I nestle close to Your Heart. Close to Your Heart, I fear nothing. In these dangerous moments, I act like a little child, carried in its mother's arms; when it sees something which menaces it, it clasps its mother's neck more firmly and feels secure.

1727 + I often see snares laid for me by souls who should not do so. I do not defend myself, but entrust myself all the more to God, who sees within me. And I see how these souls become entangled in their own snares. O God, how just and good You are!

1728 (90) **Write: I am Thrice Holy, and I detest the smallest sin. I cannot love a soul which is stained with sin; but when it repents, there is no limit to My generosity toward it. My mercy embraces and justifies it. With My mercy, I pursue sinners along all their paths, and My Heart rejoices when they return to Me. I forget the bitterness with which they fed My Heart and rejoice at their return.**

Tell sinners that no one shall escape My Hand; if they run away from My Merciful Heart, they will fall into My Just Hands. Tell sinners that I am always waiting for them, that I listen intently to the beating of their heart... when will it beat for Me? Write, that I am speaking to them through their remorse of conscience, through their failures and sufferings, through thunderstorms, through the voice of the Church. And if they bring all My graces to naught, I begin to be angry (91) with them, leaving them alone and giving them what they

want.

1729 O my Jesus, You alone know of my efforts. I seem to be a bit better, but better only to the point that I can go out on the veranda instead of lying in bed. I see and am fully aware of what is happening to me. Despite the diligent care of my superiors and the efforts of the doctors, my health is fading and running out. But I rejoice greatly at Your call, my God, my Love, because I know that my mission will begin at the moment of my death. Oh, how much I desire to be set free from the bonds of this body. O my Jesus, You know that, in all my desires, I always want to see Your will. Of myself, I would not want to die one minute sooner, or to live one minute longer, or to suffer less, **(92)** or to suffer more, but I only want to do Your holy will. Although I have great enthusiasm, and the desires burning in my heart are immense, they are never above Your will.

1730 I fly to Your mercy, Compassionate God, who alone are good. Although my misery is great, and my offenses are many, I trust in Your mercy, because You are the God of mercy; and, from time immemorial, it has never been heard of, nor do heaven or earth remember, that a soul trusting in Your mercy has been disappointed.

O God of compassion, You alone can justify me, and You will never reject me when I, contrite, approach Your Merciful Heart, where no one has ever been refused, even if he were the greatest sinner.

1731 **(93)** Today I was awakened by a great storm. The wind was raging, and it was raining in torrents, thunderbolts striking again and again. I began to pray that the storm would do no harm, when I heard the words: **Say the chaplet I have taught you, and the storm will cease.** I began immediately to say the chaplet and hadn't even finished it when the storm suddenly ceased, and I heard the words: **Through the chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My will.**

1732 As I was praying for Poland, I heard the words: **I bear a special love for Poland, and if she will be obedient to My will, I will exalt her in might and holiness. From her will come forth the spark that will prepare the world for My final coming.**

1733 **(94)** + Welcome, hidden Love, life of my soul! I welcome You, Jesus,

under these insignificant forms of bread. Welcome, sweetest Mercy, who pour Yourself out for souls. Welcome, Infinite Goodness, who pour out everywhere torrents of Your graces. Welcome, O veiled Brightness, the Light of souls. Welcome, O Fount of inexhaustible mercy, O purest Spring from which life and holiness gush forth for us. Welcome, Delight of pure souls. Welcome, only Hope of sinful souls.

1734 O my Jesus, You know that there are times when I have neither lofty thoughts nor a soaring spirit. I bear with myself patiently and admit that that is just what I am, because all that is beautiful is a grace from God. And so I humble myself profoundly and cry out for Your help; and the grace of visitation is not slow in coming to the humble heart.

1735 **(95)** O virgin, lovely flower,
You will not remain much longer in this world.
Oh, how beautiful your loveliness,
My pure bride!

No numbers can count you.
How dear is your virginal flower!
Your brightness is in no way dimmed;
It is brave, strong, invincible.

The very blaze of the noon-day sun
Dims, and darkens in the presence of a virgin heart.
I see nothing greater than virginity.
It is a flower taken from the Divine Heart.

O gentle virgin, fragrant rose,
Although there are many crosses on earth,
No eye has seen, nor has it entered into the mind of man
What awaits a virgin in heaven.

O virgin, snow-white lily,
You live wholly for Jesus alone
(96) And in the pure chalice of your heart
Is a pleasing dwelling place for God Himself.

O virgin, no one will sing your hymn.
In your song lies hidden the love of God.

Even the Angels do not comprehend
What the virgins sing to God.

O virgin, your flower of paradise
Eclipses all the splendors of this world.
And although the world cannot comprehend you,
It bows humbly before you.

Although the virgin's path is strewn with thorns,
And her life bristles with many a cross,
Who is as brave as she?
Nothing will break her; she is invincible.

O virgin, earthly angel,
Your greatness is renowned throughout the Church.
You stand guard before the tabernacle
And, like a Seraph, become all love.

1736 **(97)** Once, when I was on the veranda, I saw that a certain person was being troubled by strong temptations concerning Holy Confession, doubting its secrecy. Although I knew the condition of that soul, I myself did not start the conversation. When we were alone, she opened her heart to me and told me everything. After talking for a short while, she said to me, "I am at peace now; my soul has received much light."

1737 Today, Jesus made known to me that I should speak little with a certain religious sister. A special grace of God sustained me during the conversation, which would not otherwise have been for God's glory.

1738 The Lord said to me, **Enter into purgatory often, because they need you there.** O my Jesus, I understand the meaning of these words which You are speaking to me, but first let me enter the treasury **(98)** of Your mercy.

1739 **Write, My daughter, that I am mercy itself for the contrite soul. A soul's greatest wretchedness does not enkindle Me with wrath; but rather, My Heart is moved towards it with great mercy.**

1740 O my Jesus, give me strength to endure suffering so that I may not make a wry face when I drink the cup of bitterness. Help me Yourself to

make my sacrifice pleasing to You. May it not be tainted by my self-love, even though it extend over many years. May purity of intention make it pleasing to You, fresh and full of life. This life of mine is a ceaseless struggle, a constant effort to do Your holy will; but may everything that is in me, both my misery and my strength, give praise to You, O Lord.

(99) The Infinite Goodness of God in the Creation of the Angels.

1741 O God, who are happiness in Your very self and have no need of creatures to make You happy, because of Yourself You are the fullness of love; yet, out of Your fathomless mercy You call creatures into being and grant them a share in Your eternal happiness and in Your life, that divine indwelling life which You live, One God in Three Persons. In Your unfathomable mercy, You have created angelic spirits and admitted them to Your love and to Your divine intimacy. You have made them capable of eternal love. Although You bestowed on them so generously, O Lord, the splendor of love and beauty, Your fullness was not diminished in the least, O God, nor have their love and beauty completed You, because You are everything in Yourself. And if You have allowed them to participate in Your happiness and to exist and to love You, that is only due to the abyss of Your mercy. This is Your unfathomable goodness, for which they glorify You without end, **(100)** humbling themselves at the feet of Your majesty as they chant their eternal hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy ...

1742 Be praised, merciful God, One God in the Holy Trinity,
Unfathomable, infinite, incomprehensible,
Immersing themselves in You, their minds cannot comprehend You,
So they repeat without end their eternal: Holy.

Be glorified, O merciful Creator of ours, O Lord,
Omnipotent, but full of compassion, inconceivable.
To love You is the mission of our existence,
Singing our eternal hymn: Holy...

Be blessed, merciful God, Eternal Love.
You are above the heavens, the sapphires, the firmaments.
Thus the host of pure spirits glorifies You,
With its eternal hymn: Thrice Holy.

And, gazing upon You, face to face, O God,
I see that You could have called other creatures before them.
Therefore they humble themselves before You in great humility,
For well they see that this grace comes solely from Your mercy.

(101) One of the most beautiful spirits would not recognize Your mercy,
And, blinded by his pride, he drew others after him.
Angel of great beauty, he became Satan
And was cast down in one moment from heaven's heights into hell.

Then the faithful spirits cried, "Glory to God's mercy!"
And they stood firm in spite of the fiery test.
Glory to Jesus, the Christ abased,
Glory to His Mother, the humble and pure Virgin.

After this battle, the pure spirits plunged into the ocean of Divinity;
Contemplating and praising the depths of His mercy,
They drown in His mercy and manifold light,
Possessing in knowledge the Trinity of Persons, the Oneness of Godhead.

1743 + God's Infinite Goodness in Creating Mankind.

God, who in Your mercy have deigned to call man from nothingness into being, generously have You bestowed upon him nature and grace. But that seemed too little for Your infinite goodness. In Your mercy, O Lord, You have given us **(102)** everlasting life. You admit us to Your everlasting happiness and grant us to share in Your interior life. And You do this solely out of Your mercy. You bestow on us the gift of Your grace, only because You are good and full of love. You had no need of us at all to be happy, but You, O Lord, want to share Your own happiness with us. But man did not stand the test. You could have punished him, like the angels, with eternal rejection, but here Your mercy appeared, and the very depths of Your being were moved with great compassion, and You promised to restore our salvation. It is an incomprehensible abyss of Your compassion that You did not punish us as we deserved. May Your mercy be glorified, O Lord; we will praise it for endless ages. And the angels were amazed at the greatness of the mercy which You have shown for mankind...

1744 May You be adored, O merciful God of ours,
O All-powerful Lord and Creator.
In deepest humility, we give You praise,
Plunging ourselves into the ocean of Your Godhead.

(103) But man did not persevere in the hour of trial.
At the instigation of the evil one, he became unfaithful to You.
He lost Your grace and gifts; only misery was left him,
And tears, suffering, sorrow and bitterness, until he would rest in the
grave.

But you, O merciful God, did not let humanity perish,
And gave it the promise of a Redeemer.
You did not let us despair, despite our grave offenses,
And You sent Your prophets to Israel.

Still, day and night, mankind cries out to You,
From the abyss of misery, sin and all pain.
Hear the moaning and the tears, You who reign in heaven,
God of great mercy, God of compassion.

Man erred, but he cannot ask pardon,
Because a gaping chasm has appeared between God and man.
With the voice of his misery, he cries out, "Mercy!"
But Yahweh is silent... and century after century passes on.

But the longing of all humankind grows deeper.
A longing for Him who has been promised.

(104) Come, Lamb of God, take away our vile sins,
Come, illumine our darkness like a ray of light.

Humanity calls out to You unceasingly, O Lord of lords,
Calls out to Your unfathomable mercy, to Your compassion.
O great Yahweh, grant that we may make atonement,
Remember Your goodness, and forgive us our sins.

+ The Infinite Goodness of God
in Sending Us His Only-Begotten Son.

1745 God, You did not destroy man after his fall, but in Your mercy You

forgave him, You forgave in a divine way; that is, not only have You absolved him from guilt, but You have bestowed upon him every grace. Mercy has moved You to deign to descend among us and lift us up from our misery. God will descend to earth; the Immortal Lord of lords will abase Himself. But where will You descend, Lord; will it be to the temple of Solomon? Or will You have a new tabernacle built for Yourself? Where do You intend to come down? O Lord, what kind of tabernacle shall we prepare for You, **(105)** since the whole earth is Your footstool?

You have indeed prepared a tabernacle for Yourself: the Blessed Virgin. Her Immaculate Womb is Your dwelling place, and the inconceivable miracle of Your mercy takes place, O Lord. The Word becomes flesh; God dwells among us, the Word of God, Mercy Incarnate. By Your descent, You have lifted us up to Your divinity. Such is the excess of Your love, the abyss of Your mercy. Heaven is amazed at the superabundance of Your love. No one fears to approach You now. You are the God of mercy. You have compassion on misery. You are our God, and we are Your people. You are our Father, and we are Your children by grace. Praise be to Your mercy, that You have deigned to descend among us.

1746 Be adored, O God of mercy,
Because You have deigned to descend from heaven to earth.
Most humbly we adore You
For Your having vouchsafed to exalt all mankind.

(106) Unfathomable and incomprehensible in Your mercy,
For love of us You take on flesh
From the Immaculate Virgin, ever untouched by sin,
Because You have willed it so from all ages.

The Blessed Virgin, that Snow-White Lily,
Is first to praise the omnipotence of Your mercy.
Her pure heart opens with love for the coming of the Word;
She believes the words of God's messenger and is confirmed in trust.

Heaven is astounded that God has become man,
That there is on earth a heart worthy of God Himself.
Why is it that You do not unite Yourself with a Seraph, but with a sinner,

O Lord?

Oh, because, despite the purity of the virginal womb, this is a mystery of Your mercy.

O mystery of God's mercy, O God of compassion,
That You have deigned to leave the heavenly throne
And to stoop down to our misery, to human weakness,
For it is not the angels, but man who needs mercy.

To give worthy praise to the Lord's mercy,
We unite ourselves with Your Immaculate Mother,
(107) For then our hymn will be more pleasing to You,
Because She is chosen from among men and angels.

Through Her, as through a pure crystal,
Your mercy was passed on to us.
Through Her, man became pleasing to God;
Through Her, streams of grace flowed down upon us.

+ God's Infinite Goodness in Redeeming Man.

1747 God, You could have saved thousands of worlds with one word; a single sigh from Jesus would have satisfied Your justice. But You Yourself, Jesus, purely out of love for us, underwent such a terrible Passion. Your Father's justice would have been propitiated with a single sigh from You, and all Your self-abasement is solely the work of Your mercy and Your inconceivable love. On leaving the earth, O Lord, You wanted to stay with us, and so You left us Yourself in the Sacrament of the Altar, and You opened wide Your mercy to us. There is no misery that **(108)** could exhaust You; You have called us all to this fountain of love, to this spring of God's compassion. Here is the tabernacle of Your mercy, here is the remedy for all our ills. To You, O living spring of mercy, all souls are drawn; some like deer, thirsting for Your love, others to wash the wound of their sins, and still others, exhausted by life, to draw strength. At the moment of Your death on the Cross, You bestowed upon us eternal life; allowing Your most holy side to be opened, You opened an inexhaustible spring of mercy for us, giving us Your dearest possession, the Blood and Water from Your Heart. Such is the omnipotence of Your mercy. From it all grace flows to us.

1748 Be adored, O God, in the work of Your mercy,
Be blessed by all faithful hearts
On whom Your gaze rests,
In whom dwells Your immortal life.

(109) O my Jesus, have mercy, sorrowful was Your life on this earth,
And in terrible torment Your work came to an end,
Hanging stretched out on the wood of the Cross,
And all this for the love of our souls.

In Your inconceivable love, You allowed Your most holy side to be
opened,
And streams of Blood and Water gushed forth from Your Heart.
Here is the living fountain of Your mercy,
Here souls receive consolation and refreshment.

In the Blessed Sacrament, You left us Your mercy;
Your love deigned to arrange it so,
That, going through life, suffering and toil,
I might never doubt of Your goodness and mercy.

For even if the whole world's miseries weighed on my soul,
We must not doubt for even a moment,
But have trust in the power of God's mercy,
Because, with graciousness, God receives a contrite soul.

O unspeakable mercy of our Lord,
Source of compassion and all sweetness,
(110) Trust, trust, O soul, though you are stained by sin,
For when you approach God, you will not taste bitterness.

Because He is a living fire of great love,
When we approach Him with sincerity,
Our miseries, sins and evil deeds vanish;
He will settle our debts when we surrender ourselves to Him.

1749

+ God's Infinite Goodness in Adorning
the Whole World with Beauty

in Order to Make Man's Stay on Earth Pleasant.

O God, how generously Your mercy is spread everywhere, and You have done all this for man. Oh, how much You must love him, since Your love is so active on his behalf. O my Creator and Lord, I see on all sides the trace of Your hand and the seal of Your mercy, which embraces all created things. O my most compassionate Creator, I want to give You worship on behalf of all creatures and all inanimate **(111)** creation; I call on the whole universe to glorify Your mercy. Oh, how great is Your goodness, O God!

1750 Be adored, O our Creator and Lord.

O universe, humbly glorify your God;
Thank your Creator to the best of your powers
And praise God's incomprehensible mercy.

Come, O earth, in all your fine greenery;
Come, you too, O fathomless sea.
Let your gratitude become a loving song
And sing the greatness of God's mercy.

Come, beautiful, radiant sun.
Come, bright dawn which precedes it.
Join in one hymn, and let your clear voices
Sing in one accord God's great mercy.

Come, hills and valleys, sighing woods and thickets,
Come, lovely flowers of morningtide;
Let your unique scent
Adore and glorify God's mercy.

(112) Come, all you lovely things of earth,
Which man does not cease to wonder at.
Come, adore God in your harmony,
Glorifying God's inconceivable mercy.

Come, indelible beauty of all the earth,
And, with great humility, adore your Creator,
For all things are locked in His mercy,
With one mighty voice all things cry out; how great is the mercy of God.

But above all these beauties,
A more pleasing praise to God
Is a soul innocent and filled with childlike trust,
Which, through grace, is closely bound to Him.

1751 + O Jesus, concealed in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, my only love and mercy, I commend to You all the needs of my body and soul. You can help me, because You are Mercy itself. In You lies all my hope.

(113) [In the original there follows a completely blank page.]

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(114) J. M. J. Cracow-Pradnik, June 2, 1938

Three-day Retreat.

1752 Under the direction of Master Jesus, who Himself commanded me to make this retreat, and who selected the days on which I was to make it; namely, the three days preceding Pentecost and who, Himself, conducted this retreat.

However, I asked my confessor [probably Father Andrasz] whether I could make such a retreat, and I received his permission. I also asked Mother Superior [Irene] and received her permission too. I had resolved that I would not make the retreat unless I obtained the permission of the Superiors. I began a novena to the Holy Spirit, and waited for Mother Superior's answer.

(115) I should be beginning the retreat today, but I have not yet received news of Mother Superior's decision.

When I went to Church for the evening devotions, I saw the Lord Jesus during the litany. **My daughter, we are beginning the retreat.** I answered, "Jesus, my dearest Master, I ask Your forgiveness, but I cannot make the retreat, because I have received no news as to whether Mother Superior allows it or not." **Do not worry, My daughter, the Superior has given her permission. You will learn of it tomorrow morning. But we are to start the retreat today.**

And indeed, Mother Superior had telephoned that evening to the sister who is looking after me during my illness [Sister David], asking her to

tell me that I was allowed to make the retreat, but the sister had forgotten to tell me. It was only next morning that she told me, **(116)** and she was very apologetic that she had not told me the day before. I answered her, “Please do not worry. I have already started my retreat, according to the Superior’s wish.”

+ The First Day.

1753 In the evening, Jesus gave me the subject for meditation. At the first moment, my heart was filled with fear and joy. Then I pressed myself close to His Heart, and the fear vanished; only joy remained. I felt entirely like a child of God, and the Lord said to me, **Fear nothing. What has been forbidden to others has been given to you. The graces that are not given to other souls to discern, not even from a distance, nourish you every day, like the daily bread.**

1754 **Consider, My daughter, Who it is to whom your heart is so closely united by the vows. Before I made the world, I loved you with the love your heart is experiencing today and, throughout the centuries, (117) My love will never change.**

1755 Application. At the very thought of Him to whom my heart is wedded, my soul entered into profound recollection, and the hour passed like a minute. In this state of recollection, I came to know the attributes of God. Burning with an inner fire of love, I went out to the garden to cool off; when I looked up at the heavens, a new flame of love flooded my heart.

1756 Then I heard the words: **My daughter, have you exhausted the subject I gave you? If so, I’ll give you a new one.** I answered, “O Infinite Majesty, eternity will not be enough for me to come to know You... But my love for You has become more intense. As a token of gratitude, I lay my heart at Your feet, like a rosebud. May its fragrance delight Your Divine Heart, now and for eternity... What a paradise it is for a soul when the heart knows itself to be so loved by God...”

1757 **(118) Today, you will read chapter fifteen of the Gospel of Saint John. I want you to read it very slowly.**

Second Meditation.

1758 **My daughter, consider the life of God which is found in the Church**

for the salvation and the sanctification of your soul. Consider the use that you make of these treasures of grace, of these efforts of My love.

1759 Application: O most compassionate Jesus, I have not always known how to profit from these priceless gifts, because I have paid too little attention to the gift itself and too much to the vessel in which You were giving me Your gifts. My most sweet Master, it will be different from now on. I will put Your gifts to the best use of which my soul is capable. Living faith will support me. Whatever the form might be, under which You send me Your grace, I will accept it as coming directly from You, without considering the vessel in **(119)** which You send it. If it will not always be within my power to accept it with joy, I will always accept it with submission to Your holy will.

Conference on Spiritual Warfare.

1760 **My daughter, I want to teach you about spiritual warfare. Never trust in yourself, but abandon yourself totally to My will. In desolation, darkness and various doubts, have recourse to Me and to your spiritual director. He will always answer you in My name. Do not bargain with any temptation; lock yourself immediately in My Heart and, at the first opportunity, reveal the temptation to the confessor. Put your self-love in the last place, so that it does not taint your deeds. Bear with yourself with great patience. Do not neglect interior mortifications. Always justify to yourself the opinions of your superiors and of your confessor. Shun murmurers like a plague. (120) Let all act as they like; you are to act as I want you to.**

Observe the rule as faithfully as you can. If someone causes you trouble, think what good you can do for the person who caused you to suffer. Do not pour out your feelings. Be silent when you are rebuked. Do not ask everyone's opinion, but only the opinion of your confessor; be as frank and simple as a child with him. Do not become discouraged by ingratitude. Do not examine with curiosity the roads down which I lead you. When boredom and discouragement beat against your heart, run away from yourself and hide in My heart. Do not fear struggle; courage itself often intimidates temptations, and they dare not attack us.

Always fight with the deep conviction that I am with you. Do not be guided by feeling, because it is not always under your control; but all merit lies in the will. Always depend upon your superiors, even in the smallest things. I will not delude you with prospects of peace (121) and consolations; on the contrary, prepare for great battles. Know that you are now on a great stage where all heaven and earth are watching you. Fight like a knight, so that I can reward you. Do not be unduly fearful, because you are not alone.

Second Day.

1761 My daughter, today consider My Sorrowful Passion in all its immensity. Consider it as if it had been undertaken for your sake alone.

1762 Application: When I began to immerse myself in the Divine Passion, the great worth of the human soul and the great evil of sin were revealed to me. I understood that I did not know how to suffer. In order to gain merit for my suffering, I will unite myself more closely, in suffering, to the Passion of the Lord Jesus, asking of Him grace for dying souls, so that the mercy of God may embrace them in this grave moment.

(122) Second Meditation.

1763 My daughter, consider the rule and the vows which you have offered to Me. You know how highly I value them; all the graces that I have for the souls of religious are connected with the rule and the vows.

1764 Application: O my Jesus, I feel guilty of many imperfections on this score but, by Your grace, I do not recall any conscious and voluntary transgression of the rule or the religious vows. Continue to guard me, O my good Jesus, for of myself I am weak.

1765 Today, My daughter, for your reading you shall take chapter nineteen of Saint John's Gospel, and read it, not only with your lips, but with your heart...

1766 During this reading, my soul was filled with deep repentance. I saw all the ingratitude of creatures toward their Creator and Lord; I asked God to protect me from spiritual blindness.

Conference on Sacrifice and Prayer.

1767 (123) My daughter, I want to instruct you on how you are to rescue souls through sacrifice and prayer. You will save more souls through prayer and suffering than will a missionary through his teachings and sermons alone. I want to see you as a sacrifice of living love, which only then carries weight before Me. You must be annihilated, destroyed, living as if you were dead in the most secret depths of your being. You must be destroyed in that secret depth where the human eye has never penetrated; then will I find in you a pleasing sacrifice, a holocaust full of sweetness and fragrance. And great will be your power for whomever you intercede. Outwardly, your sacrifice must look like this: silent, hidden, permeated with love, imbued with prayer. I demand, My daughter, that your sacrifice be pure and full of humility, that I may find pleasure in it. I will not spare My grace, that you may be able to fulfill what I demand of you.

I will now instruct you on what (124) your holocaust shall consist of, in everyday life, so as to preserve you from illusions. You shall accept all sufferings with love. Do not be afflicted if your heart often experiences repugnance and dislike for sacrifice. All its power rests in the will, and so these contrary feelings, far from lowering the value of the sacrifice in My eyes, will enhance it. Know that your body and soul will often be in the midst of fire. Although you will not feel My presence on some occasions, I will always be with you. Do not fear; My grace will be with you...

Third Day.

1768 My daughter, in this meditation, consider the love of neighbor. Is your love for your neighbor guided by My love? Do you pray for your enemies? Do you wish well to those who have, in one way or another, caused you sorrow or offended you?

Know that whatever good (125) you do to any soul, I accept it as if you had done it to Me.

1769 Application: O Jesus, my Love, You know that it has only been for a short while that I have acted toward my neighbor guided solely by Your love. You alone know of my efforts to do this. It comes to me more easily

now, but if You Yourself did not kindle that love in my soul, I would not be able to persevere in this. This is due to Your Eucharistic love which daily sets me afire.

Second Meditation.

1770 **Now you shall consider My love in the Blessed Sacrament. Here, I am entirely yours, soul, body and divinity, as your Bridegroom. You know what love demands: one thing only, reciprocity...**

1771 Application: O my Jesus, You know that I desire to love You with a love that no soul **(126)** has ever before loved You with. I would like the whole world to be transformed into love for You, my Betrothed. You feed me with the honey and milk of Your Heart. From my earliest years, You reared me for Yourself alone, so that I would know how to love You now. You know that I love You, because You alone know the depth of the sacrifice I offer You each day.

1772 Jesus said to me, **My daughter, have you any difficulties in this retreat?** I answered that I hadn't. In this retreat, my mind is like lightning. I penetrate all the mysteries of faith with great ease. My Master and Leader, all darkness disappears from my mind under the ray of Your light.

1773 **Today, for your spiritual reading, you will take the Gospel of Saint John, chapter twenty-one. Let it feed your heart more than your mind.**

1774 **(127) + During the June devotions. the Lord said to me, My daughter, My favor rests in your heart. When on Holy Thursday I left Myself in the Blessed Sacrament, you were very much on My mind.**

1775 After these words, my love made great efforts to express to Him what He was to me, but I was at a loss for words and burst into tears in my helplessness. And Jesus said, **For you, I am mercy itself; therefore I ask you to offer Me your misery and this very helplessness of yours and, in this way, you will delight My Heart.**

1776 Today, a living flame of divine love entered my soul; if it had lasted any longer, I would have been consumed by the fire, freeing myself of

the bonds of the present. It seemed to me that, if it had lasted an instant longer, I would have been drowned in the ocean of love. I cannot describe these arrows of love that pierce my soul.

(128) + Conference on Mercy.

1777 **My daughter, know that My Heart is mercy itself. From this sea of mercy, graces flow out upon the whole world. No soul that has approached Me has ever gone away unconsolated. All misery gets buried in the depths of My mercy, and every saving and sanctifying grace flows from this fountain. My daughter, I desire that your heart be an abiding place of My mercy. I desire that this mercy flow out upon the whole world through your heart. Let no one who approaches you go away without that trust in My mercy which I so ardently desire for souls.**

Pray as much as you can for the dying. By your entreaties, obtain for them trust in My mercy, because they have most need of trust, and have it the least. Be assured that the grace of eternal salvation for certain souls in their final moment depends on your prayer. You know the whole abyss of My mercy, (129) so draw upon it for yourself and especially for poor sinners. Sooner would heaven and earth turn into nothingness than would My mercy not embrace a trusting soul.

1778 My resolution continues to be the same: to unite myself to Christ-Mercy.

Conclusion of the Retreat.

Last Conversation with the Lord.

1779 Thank you, Eternal Love, for Your inconceivable kindness to me, that You would occupy Yourself directly with my sanctification. — **My daughter, let three virtues adorn you in a particular way: humility, purity of intention and love. Do nothing beyond what I demand of you, and accept everything that My hand gives you. Strive for a life of recollection so that you can hear My voice, which is so soft that only recollected souls can hear it...**

1780 (130) I could not sleep until midnight today, so deeply was I stirred by

tomorrow's renewal of vows. The greatness of God embraced my whole being.

Pentecost [June 5, 1938]. Renewal of Vows.

1781 I got up much earlier than usual and went to the chapel, steeping myself in the love of God. Before receiving Holy Communion, I silently renewed my religious vows. After Holy Communion, the infinite love of God swept over me. My soul was in communion with the Holy Spirit, who is the same Lord as the Father and the Son. His breath filled my soul with such delight that it would be useless for me to try to give even a faint idea of what my heart experienced. Throughout the whole day, wherever I was and regardless of with whom I talked, a vivid presence of God accompanied me; my soul was drowned in thanksgiving for these great graces.

1782 (131) + When I went out to the garden today, the Lord said to me, **Return to your room, for I will be waiting for you there.** As soon as I returned, I saw the Lord Jesus, sitting at the table and waiting for me. He looked at me kindly and said, **My daughter, I want you to write now, because that walk would not have been in conformity with My will.** I remained alone and immediately got down to writing.

1783 + When I immersed myself in prayer and united myself with all the Masses that were being celebrated all over the world at that time, I implored God, for the sake of all these Holy Masses, to have mercy on the world and especially on poor sinners who were dying at that moment. At the same instant, I received an interior answer from God that a thousand souls (132) had received grace through the prayerful mediation I had offered to God. We do not know the number of souls that is ours to save through our prayers and sacrifices; therefore, let us always pray for sinners.

1784 Today, in the course of a long conversation, the Lord said to me, **How very much I desire the salvation of souls! My dearest secretary, write that I want to pour out My divine life into human souls and sanctify them, if only they were willing to accept My grace. The greatest sinners would achieve great sanctity, if only they would trust in My mercy. The very inner depths of My being are filled to overflowing**

with mercy, and it is being poured out upon all I have created. My delight is to act in a human soul and to fill it with My mercy (133) and to justify it. My kingdom on earth is My life in the human soul. Write, My secretary, that I Myself am the spiritual guide of souls — and I guide them indirectly through the priest, and lead each one to sanctity by a road known to Me alone.

1785 Mother Superior [Irene] visited me today, but only for a short while. When she looked around, she said that everything was too pretty here. It is true, the sisters are trying to make my stay in the sanatorium pleasant. But all this beauty does not lessen my sacrifice, which God alone can see and which will cease only when my heart stops beating. Neither the beauty of the whole earth, nor even of heaven itself, can blur the torture of my soul, which is real at each moment (134) though so deeply interior. It will end when You Yourself, Author of my suffering, say, “Enough.” There is nothing that could lessen my sacrifice.

First Friday after Corpus Christi. [June 17, 1938]

1786 Right away, on the Friday after Corpus Christi, I felt so unwell that I thought the longed-for moment was approaching. I had a high fever and spat up much blood during the night. Yet, I did go to receive the Lord Jesus in the morning, but I could not stay for the Holy Mass. In the afternoon, my temperature dropped suddenly to 35.8° C. I felt so weak that it was as if everything inside me were dying. But when I steeped myself in profound prayer, I understood that it was not yet the moment of deliverance, but only a closer call from my Bridegroom.

1787 When I met with the Lord, I said to Him, (135) “You are fooling me, Jesus; You show me the open gate of heaven, and again You leave me on earth.” The Lord said to me, **When, in heaven, you see these present days, you will rejoice and will want to see as many of them as possible. I am not surprised, My daughter, that you cannot understand this now, because your heart is overflowing with pain and longing for Me. Your vigilance pleases Me. Let My word be enough for you; it will not be long now.**

And my soul found itself once again in exile. I lovingly united myself to the will of God, submitting myself to His gracious decrees.

1788 + The conversations that I hear in this place about worldly matters make me so tired that I nearly faint. The sisters who nurse me have noticed this, because it shows outwardly.

1789 **(136)** + Today²⁵⁴ I saw the glory of God which flows from the image. Many souls are receiving graces, although they do not speak of it openly. Even though it has met up with all sorts of vicissitudes, God is receiving glory because of it; and the efforts of Satan and of evil men are shattered and come to naught. In spite of Satan's anger, The Divine Mercy will triumph over the whole world and will be worshiped by all souls.

1790 I have come to know that, in order for God to act in a soul, it must give up acting on its own; otherwise, God will not carry out His will in it.

1791 When a great storm was approaching, I began to say the chaplet. Suddenly I heard the voice of an angel: "I cannot approach in **(137)** this storm, because the light which comes from her mouth drives back both me and the storm." Such was the angel's complaint to God. I then recognized how much havoc he was to have made through this storm; but I also recognized that this prayer was pleasing to God, and that this chaplet was most powerful.

1792 I learned that a certain soul was very pleasing to God and that, in spite of all sorts of persecutions, God was clothing this person in a new and higher dignity. My heart greatly rejoiced in this.

1793 The moments which are most pleasant to me are those when I converse with the Lord within the center of my being. I try my very best not to leave Him alone. He likes to be always with us...

1794 **(138)** + O Jesus, eternal God, thank You for Your countless graces and blessings. Let every beat of my heart be a new hymn of thanksgiving to You, O God. Let every drop of my blood circulate for You, Lord. My soul is one hymn in adoration of Your mercy. I love You, God, for Yourself alone.

1795 My God, although my sufferings are great and protracted, I accept them from Your hands as magnificent gifts. I accept them all, even the ones that other souls have refused to accept. You can come to me with everything, my Jesus; I will refuse You nothing. I ask You for only one

thing: give me the strength to endure them and grant that they may be meritorious. Here is my whole being; do with me as You please.

1796 **(139)** Today, ²⁵⁵ I saw the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the sky, in the midst of a great brilliance. The rays were issuing from the Wound [in His side] and spreading out over the entire world.

1797 Today, the Lord came to me and said, **My daughter, help Me to save souls. You will go to a dying sinner, and you will continue to recite the chaplet, and in this way you will obtain for him trust in My mercy, for he is already in despair.**

1798 Suddenly, I found myself in a strange cottage where an elderly man was dying amidst great torments. All about the bed was a multitude of demons and the family, who were crying. When I began to pray, the spirits of darkness fled, with hissing and threats directed at me. The soul became calm and, filled with trust, rested in the Lord.

At the same moment, I found myself again in my own room. How this happens... I do not know.

+

1799 **(140)** J.M.J. I feel that there is a power which is defending me and protecting me from the blows of the enemy. It guards and defends me. I feel it very distinctly; it is as if I am being shielded by the shadow of His wings.

1800 My Jesus, You alone are good. Even if my heart were to make every effort to write of Your goodness, at least in part, I could not do so — this is beyond all our comprehension.

1801 One day during Holy Mass, the Lord gave me a deeper knowledge of His holiness and His majesty, and at the same time I saw my own misery. This knowledge made me happy, and my soul drowned itself completely in His mercy. I felt enormously **(141)** happy.

1802 On the following day, I had a clear awareness of the following words: “You see, God is so holy, and you are sinful. Do not approach Him, and go to Confession every day.” And indeed, whatever I thought of seemed to me to be a sin. But I did not omit going to Holy Communion, and I

resolved to go to Confession at the prescribed time, as I had no clear impediment. But when the day for confession came, I prepared a whole mass of those sins of which I was to accuse myself. However, in the confessional, God allowed me to accuse myself of only two imperfections, despite my efforts to make a confession according to what I had prepared. When I left the confessional, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, all those sins you intended to confess are not sins in My eyes; (142) that is why I took away your ability to tell them.** I understood that Satan, wanting to disturb my peace, has been giving me exaggerated thoughts. O Savior, how great is Your goodness!

1803 One day, when I was preparing for Holy Communion and noticed that I had nothing to offer Him, I fell at His feet, calling down all His mercy upon my poor soul: “May Your grace, which flows down upon me from Your Compassionate Heart, strengthen me for the struggle and sufferings, that I may remain faithful to You. And, although I am such misery, I do not fear You, because I know Your mercy well. Nothing will frighten me away from You, O God, because everything is so much less **(143)** than what I know [Your mercy to be] — I see that clearly.”

[Here ends the sixth and last notebook]

My Preparation for Holy Communion

(1) +

J. M. J.

Cracow, January 10, 1938

My Preparation for Holy Communion

Sister Maria Faustina
of the Blessed Sacrament

Congregation of the Sisters
of Our Lady of Mercy

1804 **(2)** The most solemn moment of my life is the moment when I receive Holy Communion. I long for each Holy Communion, and for every Holy Communion I give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity.

If the angels were capable of envy, they would envy us for two things: one is the receiving of Holy Communion, and the other is suffering

1805 1. + Today, I am preparing myself for Your coming as a bride does for the coming of her bridegroom. He is a great Lord, this Bridegroom of mine. The heavens cannot contain Him. The Seraphim who stand closest to Him cover their faces and repeat unceasingly: Holy, Holy, Holy.

This great Lord is my Bridegroom. It is to Him that the Choirs sing. It is before Him that the Thrones bow down. By His splendor the sun is eclipsed. And yet this great Lord is my Bridegroom. My heart, desist from this profound meditation on how others adore Him, for you no longer have time for that, as He is coming and is already at your door.

1806 I go out to meet Him, and I invite Him to the dwelling place of my heart, humbling myself profoundly before His majesty. But the Lord lifts me up from the dust and invites me, as His bride, to sit next to Him and to tell Him everything **(3)** that is on my heart. And I, set at ease by His kindness, lean my head on His breast and tell Him of everything. In the first place, I tell Him things I would never tell to any creature. And then, I speak about the needs of the Church, about the souls of poor sinners and about how much they have need of His mercy. But the time passes

quickly. Jesus, I must go to carry out the duties that are awaiting me. Jesus tells me that there is still a moment in which to say farewell. A deep mutual gaze, and we seemingly separate for a while; but, in reality, we never do. Our hearts are constantly united. Though outwardly I am distracted by my various duties, the presence of Jesus plunges me constantly in profound recollection.

1807 2. + Today, my preparation for the coming of Jesus is brief, but imprinted deeply with vehement love. The presence of God penetrates me and sets aflame my love for Him. There are no words; there is only interior understanding. I drown completely in God, through love. The Lord approaches the dwelling of my heart. After receiving Communion, I have just enough presence of mind to return to my kneeler. At the same time, my soul **(4)** is completely lost in God, and I no longer know what is going on about me. God gives me an interior knowledge of His Divine Being. These moments are short, but penetrating. The soul leaves the chapel in profound recollection, and it is not easy to distract it. At such times, I touch the ground with only one foot, as it were. No sacrifice throughout such a day is either difficult or burdensome. Every situation evokes a new act of love.

1808 3. + Today, I invite Jesus to my heart, as Love. You are Love itself. All heaven catches the flame from You and is filled with love. And so my soul covets You as a flower yearns for the sun. Jesus, hasten to my heart, for You see that, as the flower is eager for the sun, so my heart is for You. I open the calyx of my heart to receive Your love.

1809 When Jesus came to my heart, everything in my soul trembled with life and with warmth. Jesus, take the love from my heart and pour into it Your love, Your love which is burning and radiant, which knows how to bear each sacrifice, which knows how to forget itself completely.

Today, my day is marked by sacrifice...

1810 **(5)** 4. + Today, I prepare for the Coming of the King. What am I, and who are You, O Lord, King of eternal glory? O my heart, are you aware of who is coming to you today? Yes, I know, but — strangely — I am not able to grasp it. Oh, if He were just a king, but He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Before Him, all power and dominion tremble. He is

coming to my heart today. But I hear Him approaching. I go out to meet Him and invite Him. When He entered the dwelling of my heart, it was filled with such reverence that it fainted with fear, falling at His feet. Jesus gives her His hand and graciously permits her to take her place beside Him. He reassures her, saying, **See, I have left My heavenly throne to become united with you. What you see is just a tiny part and already your soul swoons with love. How amazed will your heart be when you see Me in all My glory.**

1811 But I want to tell you that eternal life must begin already here on earth through Holy Communion. Each Holy Communion makes you more capable of communing with God throughout eternity.

And so, my King, I do not ask You for anything although I know that (6) You can give me everything. I ask You for one thing only: remain forever the King of my heart; that is enough for me.

1812 Today I am renewing my act of submission to my King, by faithfulness to interior inspirations.

1813 5. + Today, I am not forcing myself to make any special preparation. I cannot think of anything, though I feel many things. I long for the time when God will come to my heart. I throw myself in His arms and tell Him about my inability and my misery. I pour out all the pain of my heart, for not being able to love Him as much as I want. I arouse within myself acts of faith, hope and charity and live on that throughout the day.

1814 6. + Today, my preparation is brief. A strong and living faith nearly tears away the veil of love. The presence of God penetrates my heart as a ray from the sun penetrates crystal. At the moment when I receive God, all my being is steeped in Him. Amazement and admiration overwhelm me when I see God's great majesty, which stoops down to me who am misery itself. There bursts forth from my soul immense gratitude to (7) Him for all the graces that He imparts to me, and especially for the grace of being called to His exclusive service.

1815 7. + Today, in Holy Communion, I want to unite myself to Jesus as closely as possible, through love. I yearn for God so ardently that it seems to me that the moment will never come when the priest will give

me Holy Communion. My soul falls as if into a swoon because of my longing for God.

1816 When I received Him into my heart, the veil of faith was torn away. I saw Jesus who said to me, **My daughter, your love compensates Me for the coldness of many souls.** After these words, I was once again alone, but throughout the whole day I lived in an act of reparation.

1817 8. + Today, I feel an abyss of misery in my soul. I want to approach Holy Communion as a fountain of mercy and to drown myself completely in this ocean of love.

When I received Jesus, I threw myself into Him as into an abyss of unfathomable mercy. And the more I felt I was misery itself, the stronger grew my trust in Him.

In this abasement, I passed the whole day.

1818 (8) 9. + Today, my soul has the disposition of a child. I unite myself to God as a child to its father. I feel completely like a child of God.

1819 When I had received Holy Communion, I had a deeper knowledge of the heavenly Father and of His Fatherhood in relation to souls.

Today I live, glorifying the Holy Trinity. I thank God that He has deigned to adopt us as His children, through grace.

1820 10. + Today, I want to be transformed, whole and entire, into the love of Jesus and to offer myself, together with Him, to the Heavenly Father.

During Holy Mass, I saw the Infant Jesus in the chalice, and He said to me. **I am dwelling in your heart as you see Me in this chalice.**

1821 After Holy Communion, I felt the beating of the Heart of Jesus in my own heart. Although I have been aware, for a long time, that Holy Communion continues in me until the next Communion, today — and throughout the whole day — I am adoring Jesus in my heart and asking Him, by His grace, to protect little children from the evil that threatens them. A vivid and even physically felt presence of God continues throughout the day and does not in the least interfere with my duties.

1822 (9) 11. + Today, my soul desires to show, in a special way, its love to Jesus. When the Lord entered my heart, I threw myself down at His feet like a rosebud. I want the fragrance of my love to rise continually to the foot of Your throne. You see, Jesus, in this rosebud, all my heart [offered] to You, not only now when my heart is burning like a live coal, but also during the day, when I will give You proofs of my love by faithfulness to divine grace.

Today, all the difficulties and sufferings that I will encounter, I will quickly seize, like rosebuds, to throw at the feet of Jesus. Little matter that the hand, or rather the heart, bleeds ...

1823 12. + Today, my soul is preparing for the coming of my Savior, who is goodness and love itself. Temptations and distractions torment me and do not let me prepare for the coming of the Lord. Therefore I desire even more ardently to receive You, Lord, because I know that when You come, You will rescue me from these torments. And if it is Your will that I should suffer, well then, fortify me for the struggle.

Jesus, Savior, who have deigned (10) to come into my heart, drive away these distractions which are keeping me from talking to You.

Jesus answered me, **I want you to become like a knight experienced in battle, who can give orders to others amid the exploding shells. In the same way, My child, you should know how to master yourself amid the greatest difficulties, and let nothing drive you away from Me, not even your falls.**

Today, I have been struggling all day long with a certain difficulty about which You, Jesus, know ...

1824 13. + Today, my heart trembles with joy. I desire very much that Jesus come to my heart. My longing heart is inflamed with an ever-increasing love.

When Jesus came, I threw myself into His arms like a little child. I told Him of my joy. Jesus listened to these outpourings of my love. When I asked pardon of Jesus for not preparing myself for Holy Communion, but for continually thinking of sharing in this joy as soon as possible. He answered that **Most pleasing to Me is this preparation with which you**

have received Me into your heart. Today, in a special way I bless this your joy. Nothing will disturb that joy throughout this day ...

1825 (11) 14. + Today, my soul is preparing for the coming of the Lord, who can do all things, who can make me perfect and holy. I am preparing very carefully for His reception, but there arose the difficulty as to how to present this to Him? I rejected it [this difficulty] at once. I will present it as my heart dictates.

1826 When I had received Jesus in Holy Communion, my heart cried out with all its might, “Jesus, transform me into another host! I want to be a living host for You. You are a great and all-powerful Lord; You can grant me this favor.” And the Lord answered me, **You are a living host, pleasing to the Heavenly Father. But reflect: What is a host? A sacrifice. And so ...?**

O my Jesus, I understand the meaning of “host,” the meaning of sacrifice. I desire to be before Your Majesty a living host; that is, a living sacrifice that daily burns in Your honor.

When my strength begins to fail, it is Holy Communion that will sustain me and give me strength. Indeed, I fear the day on which I would not receive Holy Communion. My soul draws astonishing strength from Holy Communion.

O living Host, light of my soul!

1827 (12) 15. + Today, my soul is preparing for Holy Communion as for a wedding feast, wherein all the participants are resplendent with unspeakable beauty. And I, too, have been invited to this banquet, but I do not see that beauty within myself, only an abyss of misery. And, although I do not feel worthy of sitting down to table, I will however slip under the table, at the feet of Jesus, and will beg for the crumbs that fall from the table. Knowing Your mercy, I therefore approach You, Jesus, for sooner will I run out of misery than will the compassion of Your Heart exhaust itself. That is why during this day I will keep arousing trust in The Divine Mercy.

1828 16. + Today, the Majesty of God is surrounding me. There is no way that I can help myself to prepare better. I am thoroughly enwrapped in

God. My soul is being inflamed by His love. I only know that I love and am loved. That is enough for me. I am trying my best to be faithful throughout the day to the Holy Spirit and to fulfill His demands. I am trying my best for interior silence in order to be able to hear His voice ...

Abbreviations

Used in the Endnotes

A.A.S.: Acts of the Apostolic See

A. SF.: Archives of Sister Faustina

A. SF.: Recol. Archives of Sister Faustina; Recollections of people who knew her.

A. SJ-C: Archives of the Society of Jesus-Cracow

A. SMDM-C: Archives of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy-Chronicles

A. SMDM-C and D: Archives of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy-Chronicles and Death Records

A. SMDM-D: Archives of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy-Death Records

cf.: confer

Const. Congr.: Constitutions of the Congregation (of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy)

The Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy

“From the very beginning, the Congregation’s mission has been closely related to the mystery of The Divine Mercy and the mystery of Mary — Mother of Mercy.”

The history of the Congregation has its roots in French religious communities, Mother Teresa Eva Potocka of Prince Sułkowski’s family adapted the Constitution, spirituality, and methods of apostolic work from those of Mother Theresa Rondeau, the foundress of the House of Mercy and the religious order of the same name in Laval, France. On November 1, 1862, Mother Teresa founded the first Polish House of Mercy on ́ytnia Street in Warsaw. This day marks the foundation of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Poland.

Houses of Mercy — the name given to places where the Congregation performs its apostolic work — provide shelter and care for girls and women in need who have come to the Sisters voluntarily in search of reform of life. These houses provide the warm and stable family atmosphere that is needed, away from the problems of the outside world. They provide a certain degree of anonymity, a prayer life, and chores for the girls and women that help produce positive results. Hundreds of girls and women have started their lives afresh with renewed self-respect and respect for others, along with a firm conviction about the ultimate goal of human life and a renewed sense of how to achieve it with honor.

Our Lord called St. Maria Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) — presently known worldwide as the Apostle of Divine Mercy — to become a member of this Congregation. Her mission was to remind the world of the eternal truth of God’s merciful love for us and to convey to us new forms of the devotion to The Divine Mercy. The Congregation has become spiritual heir to this mission, and thus the Sisters work to spread the message in conformity with the Church’s teachings. A sacred image of the Merciful Savior — to which veneration is accorded as a basic element of the Divine Mercy devotion revealed to St. Faustina, and to the veneration of which many graces are being continuously attributed — hangs above the side altar in the Congregation’s chapel in Cracow-Łagiewniki, where, too, St. Faustina’s mortal remains are laid to rest. This chapel has become the International

Shrine of The Divine Mercy, with a constant stream of pilgrims not only from all over Poland but also from all parts of the world.

For more information about the Congregation's spirituality and apostolic works, as well as the requirements for prospective candidates to it, please write to the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy at:

USA HOUSE: 241 Neponset Ave, Dorchester, MA 02122

GENERAL HOUSE: ul. ˚ytnia 3/9, 01 - 014 Warszawa, POLAND

NOVITIATE: ul. Siostry Faustyny 3, 30 - 420 Kraków 12, POLAND



Sister Maria Faustyna Kowalska of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy (1905-1938). The photograph was taken in Plock in 1929.



Sf. Faustina during the sole visit she made to her family during her cooveotlife. Chite rishi, ter parents: on the left ter godparents.



St. Faiisiuia with her immediate family and *odpaRiKJ.



Mother House of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy on 3/9 Żytnia Street, Warsaw, Poland, where St. Faustina entered the convent. This building was completely destroyed during World War II and a new one was built after the war.



The chapel Of the Płock Sanatorium in Cracow where St. Faustina prayed as she received treatment in the sanatorium for her illness.



The altar in the church of the Holy Spirit in Crstou-lapfinnik where St. Faustina died on October 5, 1938.



The Holy Spirit tomb at the entrance of the Shrine of Our Lady of Mary Help in Qacw-tapen Tiikj, where St. Faustina's remains were first laid to rest on October 7, 1938.



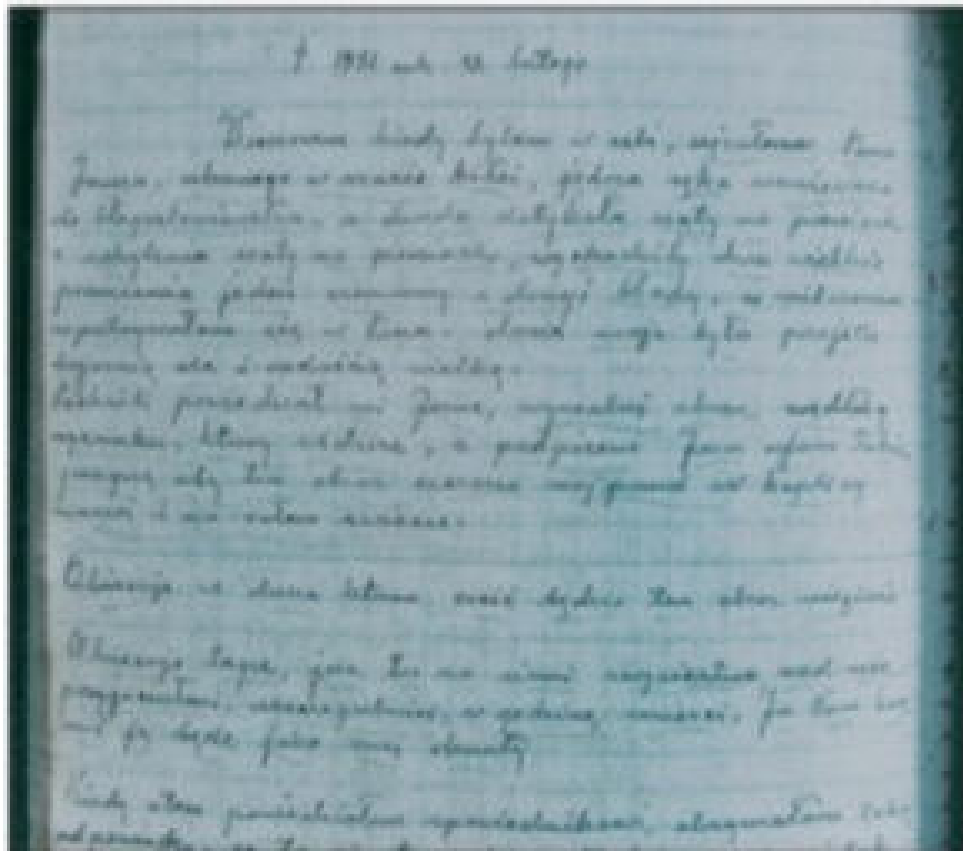
Blessed Mkhaj Sopocto, the confessor and spiritual director prepared for St. Faustina by Our Lord. He served her in that capacity during the years she was assigned to the Holy Spirit. He was beatified in Buenos Aires, Maori, on September 28, 2004.



The Rev. Father Ardrasz, S.J., St. Faustina's spiritual director and confessor. He died on September 1, 1938.

St Faustina's documeai of ideality bearing her authentic photographic portrait and signature.issued on March 2, 1931.

St Faustina's documeai of ideality bearing her authentic photographic portrait and signature.issued on March 2, 1931.



Actual *Diary* page in St. Faustina's handwriting bearing the account of her vision of Our Lord during which **Ik** ordered her to paint a sacral image after the pattern she was beholding (Diary.47).



Mother Mkbada Moraczcwsta, superior of like house in Warwitt' and later Superior General of the Congregation. Aciing on behalf of the Superior General she accepted Si. Fansiina to rhe Congregation, and Later, as the Superior General, she was a great help to her.



Sister Mana Jozefa Bncza, directress of Si. Faustina'* imtiaie class. J,0ii tor grateful I am Hl her' IWielr iffir son/ whs plunged m dwiww W if itemed to me dullwv Auwd. ike uttwcW mt jhwr the abyss Ey die pmer of diedienee" (Dm, 1112).



Sister Irene Ktzyzanowska, St. Faustina's superior in Vilnius and Cracow during the last years of her life. "My daughter, today talk openly lo the Superior {Mother Irene} About My merty because, of »11 th? superiors, she has taken the greatest part In proclaiming My merry" (Dian, 1519).



Interior view of the chapel of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Convent of Our Lady of Mercy in Cracow-Lańskie, where Saint Faustina spent her novitiate and last years after life.

¹ On February 22, 1931, while staying at Plock, Sister Faustina received Jesus' order to paint a picture according to a model that was shown to her (cf. Diary 47).

The Saint tried to fulfill the command, but not knowing painting techniques, she was unable to do it by herself. Still, she did not give up the idea. She kept returning to it and sought help from other sisters and from her confessors.

A few years later her superiors sent her to Vilnius (Wilno), where her confessor, Rev. Prof. Michael Sopocko, interested to see what the picture of a hitherto unknown theme would look like, asked the painter Eugene Kazimierowski to paint the picture according to Sister Faustina's directions. The picture was finished in June 1934 and hung in the corridor of the Bernardine Sisters' convent near St. Michael's Church in Vilnius, where Father Sopocko was rector.

In 1935, during the celebrations concluding the Jubilee Year of the Redemption of the World, the image of The Divine Mercy was transferred to the Ostra Brama ["Eastern Gate" to the city of Vilnius] and placed in a high window so that it could be seen from far away. It was there from April 26 to April 28. By permission of Archbishop Romuald Jalbrzykowski, on April 4, 1937, the image was blessed and placed in St. Michael's Church in Vilnius.

In 1944, a committee of experts was formed, at the order of Archbishop Jalbrzykowski, to evaluate the image. The experts' opinion was that the image of The Divine Mercy, painted by E. Kazimierowski was artistically executed and an important contribution to contemporary religious art.

There are several characteristic features of this original image. Against a plain background, Christ is shown walking, with a narrow halo around His head, and his eyes slightly downcast, as if He were looking from above at the spectators. His right hand is raised in a gesture of blessing; while His left hand is opening the robe at His Heart (not shown), from which two rays of light issue, a pale one to the viewer's right, a red one to the left. The light of these rays shines through the hands and the robe.

In 1943, in Lwow, at the request of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, Stanley Batowski painted another image, which was placed in a side altar of the community chapel at No. 3/9 Zytnia Street in Warsaw. During the Warsaw uprising, this chapel (and with it the image) was burned.

Batowski's image was very much liked by everyone. Encouraged by this, the Superior General of the Community of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy asked Batowski to paint another one for the house in Cracow, where the new form of devotion to The Divine Mercy was already expanding. The image was painted and sent to Cracow on October 6, 1943.

In the meantime, the superior of the Cracow house had been approached by the painter Adolf Hyla, who offered to paint some sort of picture for the sisters' chapel as a votive offering for having survived the war. The superior, Mother Irene Krzyzanowska, after consulting with the senior sisters and Father Andrasz, S.J., suggested that Mr. Hyla should paint the image according to Sister Faustina's directions. For that purpose, he was given the description (taken from Sister Faustina's Diary) along with a small copy of the image painted by Eugene Kazimierowski.

The image was finished in Autumn of 1943 and brought to the Cracow house. Batowski's image arrived at the same time. For this reason a problem arose — which of the images should be kept in the sisters' chapel? It was settled by Cardinal Sapieha, who by chance happened to be present there. He inspected the two pictures and said, "Since Hyla has painted his picture as a votive offering, that picture should stay in the sisters' chapel." He blessed the picture and ordered that it be hung. To this day the picture remains in the side altar to the left of the main entrance, in the Chapel of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy at No. 3/9 Wronia Street in Cracow, and is held in reverence as the image painted under the direction of Sister Faustina Kowalska. People from all over Poland and from abroad come to this image of the Merciful Christ to beg for needed graces. There are many votive offerings, and copies of the image are found all over the world.

S. Batowski's picture was placed in the Church of The Divine Mercy at Smolensk Street in Cracow.

Over the years, many other painters have painted images of The Divine Mercy, based on either existing representations or on Saint Faustina's diary.

² That is; in the picture.

³ During her stay in Vilnius, Sister Faustina was told by her confessor, Father Michael Sopocko, to write down her interior experiences.

When asked by someone in the Congregation why Sister Faustina had been writing a diary, Father Sopocko answered: “I was a professor at the Seminary and at the School of Theology of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius at the time. I had no time to listen to her lengthy confessions at the confessional, so I told her to write everything down and then to show it to me from time to time. This is how the Diary came into being” (Father Sopocko’s letter of March 6, 1972).

Sister Faustina mentions the confessor’s order in numbers 6 and 839 of the Diary.

In addition to this order from her confessor, the Saint mentions, on many pages of her Diary, a distinct command to write, given her by the Lord Jesus Himself (see Diary nos. 372, 459, 895, 965, 1142, 1457, 1567, 1665, and others).

⁴ Aldona Lipszycowa then lived in Ostrowek in the district of Radzymin. She was born on April 14, 1896 in Tbilisi, USSR, the daughter of Serafin Jastrzebski and Mary Lemke. In 1965/66 she was one of the witnesses in the informative process of the Servant of God.

“My husband,” she recalls, “had asked the pastor of St. James Parish in the suburb of Ochota, to find someone to help me in my housework. Rev. Canon James Dabrowski, when pastor in Klebow, became my husband’s friend. He baptized him, blessed our marriage and baptized all our children. The Rev. Canon sent us — in the summer of 1924 — Helen Kowalski with a note that he did not know her, but hoped she would be all right” (A. SF. Recol.).

⁵ The convent of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy at No. 3/9 Zytnia Street in Warsaw.

⁶ Mother Michael — Olga Moraczewska was born in 1873. She was considered highly educated for those times. She spoke several languages and completed the Conservatory of Music. She entered the congregation later in life. After making her final profession of vows, she was appointed superior of the house in Warsaw. She kept this position until 1928. After the term of office of the Superior General M. Leonard Cielecka, she administrated the entire Congregation. During her administration as Superior General, the Constitutions of the Congregations received approbation. She dearly loved her community and sought its spiritual and material development. She founded new homes in Warsaw in the suburb of Grochow, in Rabka, in Lwow, and in Biala, a house affiliated to the house in Plock, 10 km away. She died in Cracow November 15, 1966, and is buried in the Congregation’s cemetery (A. SMDM-C).

⁷ It is a Community tradition that sisters stay under the same roof with the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist. Since the chapel at the Warsaw house was in a separate building a few meters from the sisters’ house, a second chapel was made on the second floor of the sisters’ convent. By permission of the Archbishop’s Curia, the Blessed Sacrament was kept there and, in accord with church law, on certain days the Holy Mass was said. The chapel was commonly referred to as “The Little Chapel” or “The Little Jesus.”

⁸ According to the Congregation’s custom, canonical silence was observed from 9:00 p.m. Private prayers could be recited silently. Most likely the Saint thought that praying prostrate on the floor, not the prayer itself, offended this custom.

⁹ The “superiors” could be the superior general and the directress of the postulants, for they decided whether the Saint would be admitted to the reception of the habit and so to the novitiate in Cracow. The superior general at the time was Mother Leonard Cielecka, born December 24, 1850 in Paplin

Ziemi Siedleckiej. She came from a family of landowners, and received a higher education in several languages and music. Entering the Congregation on September 1, 1885, she made her perpetual vows in Warsaw in 1893, and was given responsible positions in the Congregation at an early age. In 1908 she became superior of the house in Derdy near Warsaw. From 1912 she was superior in Warsaw, and from 1918, in Walendow. After the Congregation separated from its General headquarters in France, in 1922 at the First Chapter in Poland, she became the first Superior General of all the homes in Poland. She kept this post for 6 years; i.e., until 1928, and then became assistant to the new Superior General. She died November 1, 1933.

The directress of the postulants, Mother Jane Bartkiewicz, was born July 31, 1858. She entered the Congregation on December 10, 1877, and made her perpetual vows in Laval, France in 1885. While the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy was dependent on the General Home in France, Mother Jane was Vicar General for the homes in Poland.

She was a sturdy and energetic person, sometimes even despotic. She greatly loved the Congregation and wished its good, trying to achieve this in a way repugnant to human nature. Her relationship to candidates and the young professed was peculiarly warm and affectionate. She knew how to be tenderhearted, but at the same time her method of disciplining the sisters created an atmosphere of fear. After finishing her term as Vicar General, she was for a time the Directress of Novices and of the third probation. For this reason she felt throughout her life that she had the privilege of correcting the young sisters. She died in Warsaw July 1, 1940 (A. SMDM-C and D).

¹⁰ Helen Kowalska arrived in Cracow on January 23, 1926, to finish her postulancy. That same day Sister Henry Losinska died in Cracow. Sister Henry was born on January 20, 1897. She entered the Community in 1920 and worked as a shoemaker (A. SMDM-D).

¹¹ Sister Margaret — Anna Gimbutt, was born in 1857 and entered the Congregation in 1893. She was of great service to the Congregation, performing the duty of Directress of Novices, superior of the house in Vilnius, and then, Instructress of the Third Probation. She was known for her spirit of self-denial, mortification, demanding much of herself. Humble, meek, always prayerful, outstanding in the keeping of the rules, she was an example to the sisters, especially those who were in her care.

¹² Bishop Stanislaus Rospond, born September 30, 1877, in Liszki near Cracow. After graduating from St. Ann's High School in Cracow, he entered the Seminary for the Priesthood. After a year he was sent for further studies in Innsbruck, receiving the degree of Doctor of Theology in 1904. He was ordained priest on August 10, 1901. He became prefect of the Seminary in Cracow, and then, rector. He was the ordinary confessor of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. On June 12, 1927, he was consecrated bishop. He was Vicar General for many years. His relationship with the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy was very cordial, and he took part in all the celebrations of the Congregation. Twice a year he was the main celebrant at the clothing ceremony and profession of vows. He died February 4, 1958 and is buried in his family grave in Liszki.

¹³ It was clothing day — April 30, 1926. Sister Clemens Buczek recalls that she was helping the candidates put on their habits. She wrote in her memoirs: "In May [*sic*], 1926, I was to dress Helen Kowalska. After she received the habit at the altar, I told her, 'Helen, let us hurry to put on your habit.' Helen fainted. I hurried to get the smelling salts in order to revive her.... Later I used to tease her about her loathing to leave the world. I only found out after her death that the reason of her fainting was not sorrow for the world, but something else" (A. SF. Recol.).

¹⁴ Sister Mary Joseph, Stephanie Brzoza, born in 1889. She entered the congregation in 1909 and made her perpetual vows on May 15, 1917. She was a group instructor of the girls in the Cracow institute. In 1925 she was sent to the General House of the Congregation in Laval, France, to observe more closely

the formation of novices and to absorb the spirit of the Congregation. After her return from Laval, she became directress of the novitiate on June 20, 1926, until October 30, 1934. She was an exemplary directress and a great discerner of souls. She was demanding, but at the same time full of motherly care and benevolence toward each novice. At the General Chapter in 1934, she was chosen to be a member of the General Council and simultaneously, superior of the Generalate in Warsaw. Five years later she died of cancer on November 9, 1939 (A. SMDM-C and D).

¹⁵ Father Theodore Czaputa was then the confessor of the novitiate. Born in 1884, he was ordained priest July 7, 1907. He completed his theological studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. From 1916 he taught religion in the high schools in Cracow. He was then made rector of the Minor Seminary and Tribunal Judge.

From November 1925 he was confessor of the novices of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy. He performed this function almost until death, and the novices had great confidence in him. Because of ill health, he was released of the duties of rector and moved to Lagiewniki to become chaplain of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. He died March 2, 1945 (A. Cracow Curia).

¹⁶ Superiors in the Congregation may command “in the name of holy obedience” only professed sisters. A novice was not obliged to obey such a command. If the directress used these words, she was relying on the good will and virtue of the novice, who by subordinating herself to the command could be relieved of these painful experiences (See Const. Congr. art., 96-99).

¹⁷ She probably means the words of the prophet Isaiah (49:15 JB): “Does a woman forget her baby at the breast, or fail to cherish the son of her womb? Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you”.

¹⁸ Some details of the text suggest that it was at the Warsaw house. The superior was Mother Raphael Buczynska. She was one of the most outstanding superiors. She distinguished herself by a clear, healthy judgment of people and things, a very practical sense, and at the same time a deep spiritual life. She loved the congregation and cared for its material and spiritual growth. In her relations to the sisters she was loving, straightforward, and discerning. She knew how to evaluate and put to use the accomplishments of each sister. She never degraded an individual, but rather tried to raise each one’s spirit, come to her aid and cheer her up. M. Raphael — Catherine Buczynska was born December 23, 1879. She entered the Congregation October 18, 1900, and died December 23, 1956 (A. SMDM-C).

¹⁹ The description points to the Warsaw house. The chapel was in a separate building. The entrance was from the yard. At that time the chapel was used exclusively by the sisters and their students. Lay persons hardly ever came there.

²⁰ The Community was running homes for morally neglected and “difficult” girls. These were commonly referred to as “students,” “wards,” or “children.” They were sent to the sisters by the Social Service or by parents, and some came of their own accord to do “penance.” There were up to 230 girls at the Zytnia house. They were divided into three groups called “classes.” The sister in charge of a group was called the “Mother of the Class.”

The entire description of the vision seems to be a prediction of the difficulties which the Saint will face in her work as apostle of The Divine Mercy. It also predicts the final triumph of this work, and herself in it.

²¹ The confessors were Father Kulesza and Father Roslaniec; the extraordinary confessor was Father Aloysius Bukowski, S.J.

²² The Rev. Prof. Michael Sopocko, born on November 1, 1888, at Nowosady, in the Vilnius region. He studied at the Roman Catholic Seminary in Vilnius. He was ordained priest on June 15, 1914. Later he was graduated from the School of Theology of the Warsaw University and (in 1924) from the State Pedagogical Institute.

In 1928 the Ministry of Religion and Public Education appointed him to the Chair of Pastoral Theology at the School of Theology of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius.

In 1934 he became docent of the Warsaw University, officially delegated to the Chair of Pastoral Theology at the University of Vilnius. In the same year he became rector of St. Michael's Church in Vilnius. For many years he was confessor to many communities of monks and nuns. He was ordinary confessor of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy from January 1, 1933 to January 1, 1942.

During the war he was professor at the Seminary at Bialystok, where the Vilnius seminary had been transferred (A. SF. Autobiography).

The chronicle of the Cracow house states that Father Sopocko was in Cracow on August 28, 1938. It is very likely that he visited the Servant of God at Pradnik then, but her notes stop before that date.

The Rev. Msgr. Dr. Michael Sopocko died on Sister Faustina's name day, February 15, 1976, at 8 p.m. at Bialystok. The funeral took place on February 19. The main celebrant was His Excellency Most Rev. Bishop Henry Gulbinowicz, the diocesan ordinary. With him 80 priests concelebrated. His Eminence, Stephen Card. Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, sent a telegram expressing his condolences.

²³ Before arriving in Vilnius, the Saint had seen her future spiritual director in two visions. The first took place in Warsaw, during the third probation, the second in Cracow (See Diary, par. 53 and 61).

²⁴ This was not yet consumption, which later spread throughout her whole body, but general exhaustion due to a new way of life, intense spiritual combat and experiences which made it difficult for her to perform her duties.

²⁵ She was working in the girls' kitchen, where meals were prepared for more than 200 people.

²⁶ As the doctors found no organic disease in Sister Faustina, the sisters thought that she was feigning illness, and that she preferred prayer to work (A. SF. Recol.).

²⁷ As Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire falling from heaven (See Genesis 19:24), so Warsaw was indeed destroyed during World War II, as were many Polish towns, by incendiary and demolition bombs dropped from aircraft.

²⁸ "Jozefinek," a newly created house of the Community, at 44 Hetmanska Street in the Grochow section of Warsaw. The new house was administered by the superior of the house at 3/9 Zytnia Street.

²⁹ The confessors at Plock were Rev. Msgr. Adolf Modzelewski, Rev. Msgr. Louis Wilkonski, and Rev. Wacław Jezusek.

³⁰ The superior of the Plock house was Mother Rose—Jane Klobukowska, born in 1882. She entered the congregation in 1902, and made her perpetual vows in 1909. She was superior in many of the houses of the congregation. From 1934-1945 she was Assistant to the Superior General. From 1946-1952 she was Superior General.

³¹ Father Joseph Andrzej, S.J., born at Zakopane on October 16, 1891. He entered the Jesuit Order on September 22, 1906, and was ordained on March 19, 1919. He worked at the Jesuit Publishing House (Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy) for eight years. In 1930 he became the manager of the

Publishing House and editor of the monthly *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* (*Poslaniec Serca Jezusowego*). From 1932 he was the extraordinary confessor of the novitiate of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. He died on February 1, 1963 (A. SJ-C).

³² Spiritual childhood according to the conception of St. Therese of the Child Jesus (See *Autobiography of a Soul*).

³³ Vilnius lies on the Wilia River. Across the river from the town, on woody hills, were the stations of the cross called “Calvary” (Polish *Kalwaria*). Going from station to station was called “Walking the Paths.” It was possible to get there from the sisters’ house by boat.

³⁴ Mother Irene Krzyzanowska. Sister Irene—Mary Krzyzanowska was born on November 25, 1889. She entered the Congregation on December 7, 1916 and made her perpetual vows April 30, 1924. She greatly loved the youth and was wholeheartedly given to the apostolic work. She served as educator in the institute for girls, assistant to the directress of the novitiate, superior, and assistant to the Superior General. After years of sacrificial toil she died in Wroclaw on December 3, 1971.

³⁵ Probably Sister Justine Golofit, a friend from the days of novitiate. Mother Irene, wanting to please the Servant of God, appointed her as a companion.

Sister Justine Golofit, born July 5, 1908 entered the Congregation in August 1927. She made her perpetual vows on October 30, 1934. After that she worked in the kitchen in Warsaw, Vilnius, and Radom. Because of heart trouble, she then did lighter work. She was one of the witnesses during the informational Process of the Servant of God.

³⁶ Biala, a village near Plock (today known for its petroleum fields), where the Community had purchased some farm buildings and set up a rest home for the sisters and wards of the Plock house. The sisters lived in a small farmhouse situated in the garden, with the main entrance from the side of the garden. There was a porch before the main door.

³⁷ Probably Father Peter Trojanczyk, who was recuperating at Biala and, at the same time, as the Community’s chaplain, served the sisters in spiritual matters. While decorating the chapel with flowers, Sister Faustina probably wanted to put some in the chaplain’s quarters.

Rev. Peter Trojanczyk was born April 30, 1887 and was ordained priest on June 22, 1913. On March 7, 1941, he was arrested by the Germans and sent to the camp in Dzialdow, where he was murdered that same year (Monthly Pastoral. Plock, nr. 9, 1949).

³⁸ The wards were: Imelda, Edwarda, Ignasia, Margaret and Hedwig Owar (See A. SF. and letter J. Owar). The first four have died. Hedwig Owar was a witness in the information process.

The Act concerning the vision was written in Vilnius on November 28, 1934 and signed by Sister Faustina, Sister Taida (who recorded Sister Faustina’s statements), and Imelda. Mother Irene, the superior of the house, verified its authenticity.

³⁹ The Directresses of the Novitiate made their own handbook on the vows, based on the work of Fr. Peter Cotelle, S.J., “A Catechism of Vows.” Each novice was to write the questions and answers in her notebook and study them by heart.

⁴⁰ In the Community of Our Lady of Mercy, sisters live in common rooms, several to one room. The place occupied by each is separated from the others by a stable partition. These partitioned places are called cells.

⁴¹ Sister Stanislaus Stepczynska, who was ill, was staying at the Plock house at the time. Seeing that Sister Faustina was more recollected, meek and prayerful, she spied on her and even checked her bed in search of extraordinary tools of penance (information provided by Sister Christine Korzeniowska).

⁴² That is elsewhere in the diary. For a long time Sister Faustina did not take notes of her experiences and of graces received. It was only at the explicit order of her confessor, Father Sopocko, that she began to write down her experiences as they occurred, and also earlier ones as she remembered them. After some time, she burned her notes. Father Sopocko gives the following account: “When I was in the Holy Land for a few weeks, she was persuaded by a supposed angel to burn the diary. As penance, I told her to reconstruct the part destroyed. But in the meantime new experiences came, and she wrote down new and old things alternately. Hence the lack of chronological order in the diary.”

⁴³ There are indications that it was in the house in Zytnia Street in Warsaw. The following senior mothers were there at the time: Mother Jane Bartkiewicz, Mother Margaret Gimbutt, Mother Raphael Buczynska, Mother Michael Moraczewska, Superior General. There is some probability that it was done by Mother Jane Bartkiewicz, who was very much interested in the young sisters.

⁴⁴ Perpetual vows. In the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy, the Superior General, after hearing her Council, either admits a professed sister to perpetual vows or dismisses her after five years of temporary vows (Const.).

⁴⁵ Sister Faustina was set at peace during a retreat conducted by Father Andrasz from April 20 to April 30, 1933. He understood her and gave her sound advice on how to proceed along the road of God’s readings.

⁴⁶ The Saint had in mind here the fulfillment of God’s desires regarding the painted image of Christ with the red and pale rays and the signature: “Jesus, I trust in You”; the public veneration of the image; and the making known of the chaplet and novena to The Divine Mercy. All these demands were realized as a result of the endeavors of Father Sopocko.

⁴⁷ Sister Faustina, then a postulant, was working in the kitchen with Sister Marcianna Oswiecimska. Sister Marcianna told her to wash and put away the dishes, and left. Helen (later Sister Faustina) set to work, but Sisters kept coming for the second dinner, and every now and then one of them would ask Helen to serve her dinner or do her a favor. Helen, not wanting to refuse, served each one, but did not do her assigned work. When Sister Marcianna came back and saw the dishes still not put away, she thought Helen had neglected her order and told her that for a penance she was to sit on the table, while she herself did the work.

Sister Marcianna — Julia Oswiecimska was born in 1897. She entered the Congregation in 1919. For many years she fulfilled the duties of a cook. She was energetic, demanding, but full of love of neighbor (Sister Marcianna’s Recol.).

⁴⁸ Only superiors can give orders “by virtue of obedience,” and that concerning only serious matters. Sister Marcianna could not do it and certainly did not do it. She told Helen to sit on the table as a form of penance. Helen was surprised by this kind of penance and hesitated to obey the order. Then Sister Marcianna asked the postulant: “Is this what your obedience is like, Helen?” This question was misunderstood by Sister Faustina as an order “by virtue of obedience” (Sister Marcianna’s Recol.).

⁴⁹ In some houses, including the Warsaw house at Zytnia Street, the Sisters used to have a night watch. The Sisters on duty would circle the house, light the yard, and look through the windows to protect the

house against burglary.

⁵⁰ This is the popular name of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, a congregation founded by Archbishop Felinski in 1857. The motherhouse of the Congregation is in Warsaw, at Zelazna Street and is next to the Generalate of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy.

⁵¹ See footnote 7.

⁵² She was probably replacing Sister Modest Rzczkowska, who was ill and had to undergo treatment in Warsaw (Recol. of Sister Pelagia).

⁵³ All Sisters devote one day at the beginning of the month to spiritual renewal, the so called one-day retreat. There is no recreation on that day. The Sisters keep silence and have an hour of meditation, the Way of the Cross, monthly examination of conscience, and a half hour meditation about death (cf. Const. Congr.).

⁵⁴ Every month, each novice spent one day, appointed by the Sister Directress, as the so-called day of the crusade. On that day she was obliged to practice greater recollection and union with the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, ask the Sister Directress for some additional mortification, and offer all her work, prayer and sufferings to the Lord Jesus in atonement for sinners. Some sisters continued this practice even after leaving the novitiate.

⁵⁵ Sister Faustina left 4 pages empty. She probably intended to go back and fill in some past experiences, but did not.

⁵⁶ The "Third Probation" is a period of preparation for the sisters who are to make their perpetual vows. In the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, it lasts for five months. The Saint made her Third Probation in 1932/33 in Warsaw. The Directress was Mother Margaret Gimbutt.

⁵⁷ Walendow, a house of the Congregation, located 20 km from Warsaw. The sisters had a home for girls there. In 1936, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Justice, a reformatory for first offenders (girls and women) was established there. Apart from the retreat, Sister Faustina was at Walendow from March 25 till May 1936.

⁵⁸ The retreat was conducted by Rev. Edmund Elter, S.J. He was born on November 14, 1887. He joined the order on July 15, 1905. Outstandingly gifted, he studied the humanities, theology, and (in 1919 / 20) international law at the Warsaw University. Next he studied in Rome and in France. In 1926 he became a professor of ethics at the Gregorianum in Rome. From 1932 to 1935 he was in Warsaw, and then went back to Rome as a professor of homiletics and rhetoric. He died in Rome on August 27, 1955.

⁵⁹ The center of a former estate about 1 km from Walendow, where the Congregation has a home for children. It comes from the foundation of Princess Czetwertynska, who gave the Congregation a tract of agricultural land, forest and some farm buildings for a home for morally threatened children. Until 1947 the home was administered by the superior of Walendow, but since then it is an independent unit (Hist. Congr.).

⁶⁰ "Vestuary"; that is, a storehouse for the sisters' clothing and a sewing room for same. It was the duty of the sisters working there to sew new clothes and linens, to mend and distribute to the sisters the

clothes and linens coming back from the laundry, as well as to provide them with needed clothing.

⁶¹ At that time the Congregation was divided into two choirs, the so-called director sisters and coadjutor sisters. The membership to one or the other was decided by the Congregation's governing body on the basis of the candidate's intellectual level, age and abilities. The director sisters' task was to manage the Congregation and the penitents' homes. The coadjutor sisters did the manual work and served as helpers to the director sisters, especially in the area of physical labor (Const. Congr.).

⁶² The "iron belt" was a kind of belt made of fine wire mesh, used as an instrument of penance. The Sisters could wear the belt with the superior's permission and only for a specified period of time.

⁶³ Across the hall from the "small chapel" was the congregation hall, where meetings were held.

⁶⁴ "Recreation"; that is, the time given the sisters to relax after work.

⁶⁵ Sister Faustina's younger sister, Wanda Kowalska, born in 1920. According to the information of their eldest sister, Josephine Jasinska nee Kowalska, shortly before World War II Wanda entered the Congregation of the Ursuline Sisters. During the war she was taken to Germany for forced labor. She did not return to Poland, but married an Englishman and went to England with him. Her husband was soon drafted and died in action. Wanda came to Poland once, but had to go back to England a few days later because of the political situation at the time. A few years later the family was notified by an unknown priest of Wanda's serious illness and hospitalization. She has not been heard of since.

⁶⁶ Probably one of the ordinary confessors in Warsaw.

⁶⁷ A presumed permission: when a religious does something without the superior's knowledge, on the assumption that the superior would give her permission to do it.

⁶⁸ The sisters finished the Third Probation at the Novitiate, and so ended the period of temporary vows.

⁶⁹ The pall — a large piece of black cloth with a white cross in the middle. According to the Congregation's ceremonial procedure, before taking perpetual vows the sisters prostrated themselves before the altar and were covered with the pall as a symbol of being dead to the world. In the meantime, other sisters recited Psalm 129, and the bells tolled as during a funeral. The officiating priest, usually a bishop, sprinkled the prostrate sisters with holy water and then said: "Rise, you who are dead to the world, and Jesus Christ will enlighten you."

⁷⁰ It may be supposed that Sister Faustina refers here to Fr. Elter, S.J., who, during the retreat before the Third Probation, set her at peace and encouraged her to be faithful to God's graces.

⁷¹ See footnote 32.

⁷² There was a custom in the Congregation that, every month, sisters would ask the superior for permission to practice little mortifications, say additional prayers, have various small things at their disposal, be freed from observing the regulations which they momentarily could not keep, and for many other things according to the individual needs of a given sister.

⁷³ Bishop Rospond, a great friend of the Congregation, who for many years presided over the ceremonies of clothing and vows, celebrated Mass and gave the homily for the occasion. During the

clothing ceremony he presented the postulant with the habit and veil; the novices with the cincture and rosary, the crucifix, and the black veil; the temporary professed with a burning candle and a ring as a sign of perpetual betrothal with the Lord Jesus (cf. 12).

⁷⁴ The Jesuits have a thirty-day retreat during their third probation, before perpetual vows.

⁷⁵ The superior at Czestochowa at the time was Mother Seraphina Kukulska. Sister Seraphina, baptized Salomea, was born November 30, 1873. She entered the Congregation July 18, 1894. She was a group instructor and then superior in Cracow, Czestochowa, Walendow. She died June 10, 1964 (A. SMDM-C and D).

⁷⁶ The formation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy is based on the asceticism of St. Ignatius of Loyola, who distinguishes three degrees of humility.

⁷⁷ The picture painted in Vilnius by artist Eugene Kazimierowski (cf. 1).

⁷⁸ Probably Sister Philomena Andrejko, who died in Warsaw on July 13, 1934, at 4:45 p.m.

⁷⁹ All sisters in good health had an adoration of atonement, so-called holy hour, every Thursday from 9 to 10 p.m. Before the first Friday of the month, the adoration lasted all night, with sisters changing every hour.

⁸⁰ Dr. Helen Maciejewska, born 1888, was the doctor of the Sisters in Vilnius. In February 1935 she moved to Wilejka to assume directorship of the county hospital. She was a good and valued doctor, noted for her comprehensive mind, and a sensitive and sacrificial heart for the sick. She died on September 21, 1965.

⁸¹ There is a church of The Divine Mercy in Smolensk Street in Cracow, built in 1629. Its patronal feast is celebrated on September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

⁸² Chapter (Polish *Kapitula*) — a meeting during which the house superior gave a short exhortation and made observations on the observance of the rule, and the sisters accused themselves of external shortcomings.

⁸³ The superior in Vilnius at this time was Sister Borgia — Hedwig Tichy, born January 25, 1887. She entered the Congregation in 1913. She was a nurse, and also a superior in Vilnius and Walendow. She died in Wroclaw on April 26, 1970. She was a witness in the informative process.

⁸⁴ Probably Sister Frances of the Bernardine Sisters who, on January 15, 1936, paid a visit with her superior to the Sisters in Vilnius (A. SMDM-C).

⁸⁵ “Benediction” — a short service which concluded with a blessing with the Blessed Sacrament.

⁸⁶ The chain, like the belt (cf. 62), is made of a wire mesh in the shape of a bracelet and is used as an instrument of penance.

⁸⁷ We know from Father Sopocko’s letter of November 1937 to Sister Faustina that he talked to the nuncio, Archbishop Cortesi about establishing a Feast of The Divine Mercy. He hoped the nuncio would present the matter to the Holy Father (See Letters 160).

⁸⁸ The way she recorded the resolutions on clean sheets has been reproduced according to the original diary entry.

⁸⁹ The vision concerns Father Sopocko, who was to suffer greatly because of the destruction of the devotion to The Divine Mercy. The prediction was almost literally fulfilled. Decree No. 65/52 of the Sacred Congregation of The Holy Office, dated November 28, 1958, and a notification of March 6, 1959, prohibited the spreading of the devotion to The Divine Mercy in the form given by Sister Faustina. As a result, the images which had been hung in many churches were removed. Priests stopped preaching about The Divine Mercy. Father Sopocko himself was severely admonished by the Holy See and suffered many other troubles in connection with the spreading of the devotion to The Divine Mercy.

The Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy was also forbidden to spread the devotion; in consequence, the images, the chaplet, the novena and all other things that might suggest that the devotion was being propagated were withdrawn. It appeared that the work of mercy, so much recommended by Sister Faustina, had been destroyed and would never rise again.

Until the notification, the image of The Divine Mercy received much honor in the Congregation's home in Cracow, where Sister Faustina died, and it was covered with votive offerings. A solemn Mass was held on the third Sunday of each month, and priests preached sermons about The Divine Mercy. The first Sunday after Easter was celebrated as the Feast of The Divine Mercy, which Cardinal Adam Sapieha in 1951 invested with a plenary indulgence for seven years.

In view of the Holy See's ban, the Sisters addressed the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of Cracow, Archbishop Baziak, to inquire what should be done with the image which hung in the side altar, covered with many votive offerings, and what attitude should be taken towards the celebrations in praise of The Divine Mercy. In answer, Archbishop Baziak ordered the image to be left in its place and the faithful not to be forbidden to pray before the image for needed graces. He also ordered the existing celebrations to be maintained.

In this way the devotion to The Divine Mercy survived the test in the small center of the Congregation in Cracow, at 3/9 Wronia Street, where the body of the Saint is buried. At present, the devotion is again gathering force, renewing and attracting the interest of theologians.

Since the first part of her prophecy was fulfilled almost literally, it could well be supposed that the remainder of it would also come to pass. For, regarding prophecy, the Word of God offers this instruction: "...know that, even though a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if his oracle is not fulfilled or verified, it is an oracle which the Lord did not speak" (Deuteronomy 18:22). The following facts attest to the genuineness of St. M. Faustina's prophecy:

On June 30, 1978, The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (A.A.S. page 350) published a "Notification" signed April 15, 1978, by His Eminence Franjo Cardinal Seper, Prefect, and Archbishop Jerome Hamer, O.P., Secretary. It is as follows:

From various places, especially from Poland, even proceeding from competent authority, it has been asked whether the prohibitions contained in the "Notification" of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, published in the Acts of the Apostolic See, in the year 1959, p. 271, regarding the devotion to The Divine Mercy in the forms proposed by Sister Faustina Kowalska, must be regarded as still in force.

This Sacred Congregation, having now in possession the many original documents, unknown in 1959; having taken into consideration the profoundly changed circumstances, and having taken into account the opinion of many Polish Ordinaries, declares no longer binding the prohibitions contained in the quoted "Notification."

On July 12, 1979, in response to the Superior General of the Congregation of Marians of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M., who in the name of the Provincial Superior of the American Province of St. Stanislaus Kostka, of said Congregation, had asked for an authoritative explanation of the scope of the text in the "Notification" of 1978, rescinding the prohibitions to spread the devotion to

The Divine Mercy proposed by Sister Faustina Kowalska, the Prefect of The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ascertained:

In reference to that matter (raised in the letter of Father General) I have the honor of informing you that with the new “Notification” (A.A.S., 30 June 1978, p. 350), arrived at in the light of original documentation examined also by the careful informative intervention of the then Archbishop of Cracow, Card. Karol Wojtyła, it was the intention of the Holy See to revoke the prohibition contained in the preceding “Notification” of 1959 (A.A.S., 1959, p. 271), in virtue of which it is understood that there no longer exists, on the part of this S. Congregation, any impediment to the spreading of the devotion to The Divine Mercy in the authentic forms proposed by the Religious Sister mentioned above [The Servant of God Sister Faustina Kowalska].

Furthermore, St. Faustina’s spiritual director lived long enough to give his sworn testimony regarding her holy life and heroic virtues at the beginning of the canonical process towards the declaration of her sainthood. Then, it was hardly three years and two months after his death (which occurred on February 15, 1975, and which happened to be Sr. Faustina’s name day, as well as the day on which St. Claude Colombière, S.J. — the spiritual director of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, to whom the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was revealed — died) that the 20-year prohibition concerning Sr. Faustina’s writings and proposed forms of The Divine Mercy Message and Devotion began to spread again with renewed vigor throughout the world.

Exactly six months after the ban was lifted by Pope Paul VI, the Archbishop who inaugurated her beatification process was elected Pope. The second Encyclical of his pontificate was *Dives in Misericordia* (God, who is rich in mercy). It was published in November 1980, and immediately hailed by Non-Catholics as among the greatest of Papal Encyclicals, though it took Catholics almost a year to come to the realization of the timeliness of and need for such a teaching. At that time, Pope John Paul II had not yet seen Sr. Faustina’s spiritual *Diary*.

Not only was Sr. Faustina beatified in 1993 and listed among the Saints during the Jubilee Year 2000, but during the homily on the occasion of her canonization ceremonies the Holy Father announced the extension to the entire Church of the **Feast of The Divine Mercy**, for the establishment of which Our Lord pressed the “Secretary” and “Apostle” of His mercy to exert every effort. (Permission to celebrate the Second Sunday of Easter as the Feast of The Divine Mercy was granted to Poland in 1995 in response to a request made to the Holy See by the entire Polish Hierarchy.) Divine Mercy Sunday is being jubilantly and ever-increasingly celebrated in practically every country around the world. This happened a little over sixty years after St. Faustina’s death; whereas, it took a hundred years before the Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was officially established by the Church — in that case also only after a request of all the bishops of Poland! — and another hundred years before the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was extended to the universal Church.

What is more, as though expressing the fulfilment of St. Faustina’s prophecy: “And then God will act with great power, which will give evidence of its authenticity. It will be **a new splendor** for the Church, although **it has been dormant in it from long ago**.” The Holy Father declared in the same homily: “Jesus told Sr. Faustina: ‘Humanity will not find peace until it turns trustfully to divine mercy’ (*Diary*, p. 132). Through the work of the Polish religious, this message has become linked forever to the 20th century, the last of the second millennium and the bridge to the third. **It is not a new message but can be considered a gift of special enlightenment** that helps us to relive the Gospel of Easter more intensely, to offer it as a ray of light to the men and women of our time. What will the years ahead bring us? What will man’s future on earth be like? We are not given to know. However, it is certain that in addition to new progress there will unfortunately be no lack of painful experiences. **But the light of divine mercy** [splendor], **which the Lord in a way wished to return to the world** [dormant...from long ago] **through Sr. Faustina’s charism, will illumine the way for the men and women of the third millennium**” (emphasis added). Even this final part of the prophecy was verified: “When this triumph comes, we shall already have entered the new life in which there is no suffering. But before this, your [spiritual director’s] soul will be surfeited with bitterness at the sight of the destruction of your efforts.

... But God has promised a great grace especially to you and to all those [here she quotes Jesus' words] ***...who will proclaim My great mercy. I shall protect them myself at the hour of death, as My own glory.***"

⁹⁰ The retreat in Vilnius, held from February 4 to February 12, 1935, was conducted by Father Macewicz, S.J. At the end of the retreat there was a mass in the Eastern Rite, and the sisters received Communion under both species.

⁹¹ Renewal of the vows. The constitutions of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy contained the provision that twice a year, after the eight-day and the three-day retreats, each sister should renew her vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, together with the whole community, by reciting aloud a shortened formula, to which the following prayer was added: "My Lord, grant me the grace, to observe them more faithfully than I have up to now."

⁹² Sister Faustina's family lived in the village of Glogowiec, district of Turek, province of Lodz.

⁹³ Sister Maria Salomea Olszakowska, who died in June 1962.

⁹⁴ The image of The Divine Mercy, with two rays, a pale and a red one, painted by Eugene Kazimierowski in Vilnius. The picture was displayed for public veneration in the Dawn Gate at the conclusion of the Jubilee of the Redemption of the World, April 26-28, 1935 (See Diary no. 419 and footnote 1).

⁹⁵ Sister Faustina thought she was to leave the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy and found a new community, whose task would be to spread the devotion to The Divine Mercy and pray for mercy for the world.

⁹⁶ Sister Faustina wrote that the Lord Jesus was demanding from her the founding of a new community, whose aim would be to pray for Divine Mercy for the world and to spread the devotion of The Divine Mercy. As she did not want to do anything on her own, Sister Faustina confided these inspirations to her confessor, Father Sopocko, to her Superior General, Mother Michael Moraczewska and, after coming to Cracow, also to Father J. Andrasz, S.J.

The confessors were undecided; Mother Michael gave her permission after long hesitation, but stressed that she was taking no responsibility. Sister Faustina turned to Archbishop Romuald Jalbrzykowski with her inspirations. He did not refuse, but said it was necessary to wait for a clearer sign from heaven. Despite steady efforts, Sister Faustina did not live to see the new community founded. It was only owing to Father Sopocko's efforts that the matter arose at a "Bible Hour" meeting in 1941; and on October 15, 1941, the first candidate took the vow of chastity before Father Sopocko and pledged poverty and obedience. In the next year other candidates joined her and made similar vows and promises. In 1946 the first candidates, Osinska and Naborowska, left Vilnius and settled at Mysliborz, in the Diocese of Gorzow. Others soon followed, and slowly the Congregation began to develop.

On August 2, 1955, the ordinary of Gorzow, Zygmunt Szelazek, on the basis of special authorization, established the Congregation of the Most Holy Lord Jesus Christ, Merciful Redeemer, whose aim was to spread the cult of The Divine Mercy and to assist the Church hierarchy. In this way the wish of the Saint was fulfilled without her personal participation (See O. Izydor Borkiewicz, O.F.M.Con., "Kowalska Helena" manuscript, P. 18).

⁹⁷ Sister Faustina had in mind the founding of the new community and was asking St. Ignatius for help.

⁹⁸ The three-day retreat on August 12-16, 1935, was conducted in Vilnius by Father Rzyckowski, S.J., later provincial of the northern province of the Society, which had its headquarters in Warsaw.

⁹⁹ The Archbishop of Vilnius at the time was The Rev. Romuald Jalbrzykowski (1876-1955). He was graduated from the seminary in Petersburg (1898-1902), and was ordained in 1901. He became professor at the seminary in Sejny and canon of the Sejny chapter. He was evacuated to Petersburg during World War I, and then moved to Minsk, where he conducted lively pastoral, educational and social activities. After several years of wandering, he returned to Sejny in 1917. Consecrated bishop in 1918, he worked as an auxiliary in the Polish section of the diocese of Sejny. From 1921 he was the Apostolic Delegate, and in 1926 the first ordinary of the newly established diocese of Lomza. On the death of the Metropolitan of Vilnius, Archbishop Jan Cieplak, he assumed government of the Diocese of Vilnius on September 8, 1926. On March 13, 1940 he was arrested by the Germans and interned in the monastery of the Marian Fathers at Mariampol in Lithuania. He returned to Vilnius on August 5, 1944. In December of the same year, he was again arrested and imprisoned in Vilnius. After the end of World War II, he had to transfer to Bialystok, where he devoted all his energies to the organization of the Metropolitan Curia, appointing priests to the vacant parishes and dealing with many necessary matters.

In his relationships with others, Archbishop Jalbrzykowski was simple, accessible, understanding and patient. But towards himself he was very exacting. He died in Bialystok on June 19, 1955.

¹⁰⁰ Father Sopocko placed this chaplet to The Divine Mercy, as found here in Sister Faustina's Diary, on the back of a holy card (a copy of the painting by Kazimierowski in Vilnius) and had it published by the Cebulski Publishing House in Cracow (See Letters #75, 87-90).

¹⁰¹ Father Sopocko, not sure of Sister Faustina's inspirations regarding the establishing of a new community, wanted to refer the matter to one more priest for consideration, and for that reason he told Sister Faustina to give an account of all the commands she received to her former confessor, Father Andrasz, S.J., in Cracow.

¹⁰² The Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy has its own cemetery in Cracow, which is in the park, separated from the rest of it by a thick wall with a wide entrance gate. All the sisters and wards who die in Cracow are buried there. Sister Faustina was buried here too, and her body was in a tomb in the cemetery until the exhumation of her body on November 25, 1966.

¹⁰³ Sister Vitalina Maslowska, born Dec. 4, 1852, died Jan. 6, 1939.

¹⁰⁴ During monthly individual meetings with the superior, the sisters asked her for permission to say private prayers not included in the Congregation's rules (cf. 72).

¹⁰⁵ There is no custom in the Congregation of adding a cognomen to the religious name. But it is possible for a sister to make an addition to her name, depending on the devotion she has, as, for instance, Sister Faustina did, adding "of the Blessed Sacrament."

¹⁰⁶ In the sisters' dining room (refectory) there was a bulletin board on which the superior put the names of the sisters who had some special duty for the given week. In this case, it was duty at the gate during community meals that was meant.

¹⁰⁷ In the former Constitutions, the title "Mother" was reserved for the members of the General Council of the Congregation and all the house superiors. The wards also addressed their educators as

“Mothers.”

[108](#) The Postulancy is the first probation period in the Congregation. During this time the candidate gets to know better the Congregation of which she wishes to become a member, and the Congregation likewise gets to know her.

[109](#) After the period of postulancy, the candidate makes an eight-day retreat. During the clothing ceremony she receives the religious habit and new name and begins her novitiate. This is a further step to test whether the religious life is for the candidate; and at the same time, the candidate has the chance to better know the Congregation of which she is to become a member.

In the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy the novitiate lasts for two years. The first, known as the “canonical,” is dedicated to the deepening of the spiritual life and convent practices. During this time the novice cannot attend formal schooling, spend time in studies, or perform any absorbing tasks.

During the second year of novitiate, the novices may, in addition to their religious practices, study or work under the direction of the professed sisters.

If, after this period, the Congregation and the novice are satisfied, the novice makes a profession of vows for one year, renewing them for the next five years annually. During this time, the professed sister may leave the Congregation or be dismissed. If all turns out positive, the professed sister is allowed to take perpetual vows (Const. Congr.).

[110](#) In the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy the sisters take simple vows. In the Congregation proposed by Sister Faustina, the sisters would take solemn vows.

[111](#) Office — a liturgical prayer of the Church consisting of psalms and versicles. All sisters have an obligation to say the Office.

[112](#) By the *enclosure*, or *cloister*, is meant a certain section of the convent restricted to members of the Congregation only.

[113](#) For every religious house, the local Ordinary appointed a regular confessor to whom every sister should go to confession. According to a provision of Canon Law, the local Ordinary should also appoint an extraordinary confessor for every house. His duty was to visit the house at least four times a year to hear confessions. All sisters had to see him, if not to confess, then at least to receive a blessing.

[114](#) The Saint had a vision of the future community’s house. It was in Vilnius, at 12 St. Anna Street, and it was in complete ruin. Father Sopocko had the house restored with his own money and intended eventually to place the new community in it. The war interrupted the realization of these plans (See letter of Fr. Sopocko March 31, 1972).

[115](#) “In the dust” — a figurative expression of the Saint for the way she responded to her feeling of guilt.

[116](#) *Pinafore*, or *apron*, could mean several things. For children it was a substitute for a shirt, and Sister Faustina had this in mind.

[117](#) Sister Faustina probably saw the house of the Congregation of the Most Merciful Redeemer at Mysliborz.

[118](#) Probably Father Ladislaus Wantuchowski, S.J., who looked after the Congregation of the Most

Merciful Redeemer for ten years while Father Sopocko was in hiding.

[119](#) A lash, whip, or similar instrument for the infliction of pain, used by religious as a means of doing penance.

[120](#) Probably the fasts on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

[121](#) The church in Poland accepted the practice that in each quarter of the year, three days — Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, called “Ember days” — were set aside for fasting and penitence, and special prayers were said for priests and for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

[122](#) At that time fasting was obligatory on the eve of the following feasts: Pentecost, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and All Saints.

[123](#) Some communities, including the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy, by solemn act elected the Mother of God as their Superior General, and entrusted to her all matters of this and future life. The act took place on August 5, 1937, at the General House in Warsaw, with all the superiors participating. Then the act was repeated in all the houses on August 15, 1937, with the participation of all the sisters of the Congregation.

[124](#) The priest was Father Sopocko, who writes this in his memoirs of Sister Faustina: “...my troubles reached their peak in January 1936. I never mentioned them to anyone, and it was only on the critical day that I asked Sister Faustina for prayer. To my great surprise, all my troubles vanished into thin air on that very day, and Sister Faustina told me she had taken all my suffering upon herself and experienced so much suffering on that day as she never had before” (A. SF. Recol.).

[125](#) *Te Deum*, a hymn of thanksgiving, sung during all major feast days and thanksgiving devotions. Religious congregations pray it during Matins. The origin of the hymn is ascribed to St. Ambrose, which explains why it was often called the “Ambrosian Hymn.”

[126](#) Probably Sister Veronica Rapisz. Born March 18, 1853, she entered the Congregation on December 16, 1881. She had spent all her life as a religious working in the garden. In her last years she devoted very much time to prayer. She died in Vilnius on January 28, 1936 (A. SMDM-C and D).

[127](#) “The whole Congregation” probably means all the sisters of the house, in this case, of the Vilnius house.

[128](#) Probably Father Anthony Korcik, chaplain of the Congregation’s house in Vilnius from August 10, 1934 until 1940. Father Korcik was born about 1892, and ordained priest in 1920 for the diocese of Luck and Zytomierz. He graduated from the School of Theology of the Warsaw University, specializing in philosophy. From 1929 he lectured on the history of philosophy at the University of Vilnius. After the war he went to Lublin, where he taught logic at the Schools of Theology and Philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin. He died in Lublin on October 24, 1969.

[129](#) This vision is mentioned by Father Sopocko in his letter of March 31, 1972.

[130](#) As in other houses, at the Vilnius house the sisters had an institution for girls. The wards sometimes participated in adoration with the sisters to atone for their own sins and for the sins of others.

¹³¹ It was probably Sister Antonina Grejwul, who writes in her memories of Sister Faustina as follows: “After confessions I was worried and doubting whether the Lord Jesus had forgiven me. Weeping, I asked Sister Faustina for prayer. Next morning she said, ‘Sister, you have grace with Jesus, because He answered at once that He was not angry with you for your sins, but was hurt by your distrust in His forgiveness. I will pray to propitiate Him for you’ ”

Sister Antonina Grejwul, born Sept. 13, 1877, entered the Congregation in Vilnius on June 29, 1909. She stayed in Vilnius until the closing of the house in 1945. During World War II, in 1939, she was imprisoned in the Lukiszki prison in Vilnius together with the other sisters. As a Latvian she was freed after a while. After the sisters had left Vilnius she was sent to the Congregation’s house at Biala near Plock, where she died on January 22, 1960 (A. SMDM-C and D).

¹³² One can assume that it was Sister Petronela Basiura, who worked in the garden before Sister Faustina’s assignment to Vilnius, and because she was stronger was given the duty to raise the cattle. She died March 5, 1959, in Czestochowa (A. SMDM-C and D).

¹³³ It was probably Sister Regina Jaworska, who knew St. Faustina from novitiate days. Sister Regina — Valeria Jaworska was born November 28, 1905. She entered the Congregation in 1926 and made her perpetual vows October 30, 1933. She was a witness during the information process of the Servant of God.

¹³⁴ Most probably the regular confessor of the Sisters in Walendow, Father Ceslaus Maliszewski.

¹³⁵ Letter of Father Sopocko, written in Vilnius July 10, 1936 (see Letter #49).

¹³⁶ Probably Father Sopocko’s pamphlet called *Milosierdzie Boze* (Studium teologiczne-praktyczne) [*The Divine Mercy* (A Theological — Practical Study)], published in Vilnius in 1936. Imprimatur was given by Bishop Romuald on June 30, 1936, No. R. 298/36 (A. SF.). The cover of the pamphlet showed a color copy of Eugene Kazimierowski’s image painted in Vilnius.

¹³⁷ Dr. Adam Silberg, from the sanatorium at Pradnik. Dr. Silberg, a convert, was about 40 years old then. In the years 1937-1939 (until the outbreak of the war) he was the director of City Sanatoriums (Polish *Miejskie Zakłady Sanitarne*) at Pradnik Bialy in Cracow, popularly known as *Sanatorium* (now a special city hospital named Dr. Anka Hospital). He lived on the premises of the hospital together with his wife and son Kazimierz. It is not sure what happened to him after the outbreak of the war. According to the account of Mr. Ludwik Spytkowski, retired janitor at the hospital, Dr. Silberg tried to make his way to the east, together with his wife, and was shot by the Germans near Lwow. Another version, given by Dr. Adamczewski, a radiologist at the hospital, says that Dr. Silberg made his way to France with a group of doctors, then went to Scotland and died there during the war.

¹³⁸ Probably Sister Fabiola, who had tuberculosis and therefore was in the infirmary. Sister Fabiola Pawluk, born in 1912, entered the Congregation on April 16, 1934. She died in Czestochowa on November 25, 1947 (A. SMDM-C).

¹³⁹ The Feast of The Divine Mercy — as the Saint stated — according to Jesus’ wish was to be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter (See Diary par. 49, 88, 280, 299, 420, 570, 699, 742).

¹⁴⁰ The cook, Sister Bronislaus — Julianna Jaworska, born in 1886, entered the Congregation in 1908. She died on February 11, 1972.

[141](#) The doctor at the Pradnik sanatorium confirmed that Sister Faustina had tuberculosis of the lungs. He ordered her to be separated from the others to prevent infection. Sister Faustina was put in the room for the seriously ill, called the infirmary.

[142](#) Father Sopocko, in his letter of Oct. 5, 1936, asked Sister Faustina for the texts of the Chaplet and the Novena to The Divine Mercy.

[143](#) The following sisters came to take their perpetual vows then: Sister Boleslaus Domagalska, b. 1902; Sister Cyprian Rząd, b. 1903; Sister Damiana Ziolk, b. 1909; Sister Marceline Kobrzyniecka, b. 1906; Sister Pancratia Nalewajko, b. 1908; Sister Sebastiana Gabinowska (1905-1942). It is difficult to say which of the sisters confided to Sister Faustina, but it can be supposed it was Sister Sebastiana Gabinowska, who often went through periods of depression. She even asked her superiors to postpone the date of her perpetual vows. Soon after perpetual profession she showed symptoms of mental illness. She was sent to the mental hospital at Kobierzyn near Cracow. She shared the fate of other patients during the occupation: they were taken away and executed by the Germans. The death took place probably at the end of June 1942 (A. SMDM-C and D).

[144](#) In this case the preacher was Father Ladislaus Wojton, S.J., who from October 20 to 29, 1936, conducted the retreat before the vows.

[145](#) Probably Sister Gertrude Budzinska (1875-1966), who shared a room with Sister Faustina for some time.

[146](#) After novitiate the sisters take temporary vows for one year. These are repeated for five years. Then perpetual vows are taken. Sister Faustina took her temporary vows (which she calls annual vows) on April 30, 1928.

[147](#) This was a letter written on September 21, 1936, in which Father Sopocko informed Sister Faustina about the developments regarding the spreading of the devotion to The Divine Mercy and the founding of the new community.

[148](#) Probably a vision of the house of the Congregation of the Most Merciful Redeemer at Mysliborz. The community was founded by Father Sopocko after Sister Faustina's death. The Mysliborz sisters conduct the catechesis of children.

[149](#) Sister Faustina probably made a mistake about her age here; as she herself writes in the Diary, she received the grace in the Octave of Corpus Christi in 1925. As she was born in 1905, she was 20, not 18 in 1925.

[150](#) Sister David — Antonina Cedro. She was born September 17, 1898, and entered the Congregation of Servants of the Sacred Heart (Polish *Sercanki* or *Pelczarki*), founded by Bishop Joseph Pelczar in 1894. Sisters from the Congregation worked at the Pradnik hospital.

[151](#) Sister Felicia — Jane Zakowiecka. Born in 1900, she entered the Congregation in 1926 and made perpetual vows in 1934. She was the house econom at Vilnius and Cracow, and then became house superior at Rabka, and finally at Derdy. She met with the Saint at Vilnius and later, from 1936 to 1938, in Cracow. She was a witness at the information process of Sister Faustina. She died at the Wrocław house on November 7, 1975.

[152](#) The Congregation's house in Cracow was about 10 km from Pradnik, where Sister Faustina was staying. In those days, a trip to the sanatorium required much time and trouble, and this is why Sister Faustina was not visited very often.

[153](#) This refers to the sufferings and humiliations experienced by Father Sopocko in his efforts to spread the cult of The Divine Mercy and to found a new community. Sister Faustina received inner knowledge of these sufferings and wrote about it in a letter to Father Sopocko (Letter of March 6, 1972).

[154](#) Sister Chrysostom — Mary Korczak. Born in 1892, she entered the Congregation in 1921. She worked as a group instructor and as a nurse. She came in contact with Sister Faustina in Vilnius, and then during Sister Faustina's last illness in Cracow. She was appointed to be a witness at the information process for reasons of her office.

[155](#) Sister Cajetan — Mary Bartkowiak. Born January 19, 1911, she entered the Congregation in 1933. She was with Sister Faustina in Warsaw and in Cracow. She was a witness at the information process in 1965/66.

[156](#) After Christmas, Sister Faustina was taken back to the hospital at Pradnik by Sister Damiana Ziolk, who gives the following account of the circumstances of the trip: "At night a little baby was left by the convent gate. In the morning Sister Frances found it, took care of it, washed and fed it, and started to look for someone to look after the baby. A neighbor who had no children of her own and wanted a foster child learned about it. She readily accepted the Congregation's offer, took in the foundling and agreed to give it her name. The cab which was taking Sister Faustina to Pradnik gave the woman a lift to the parish church in Podgorze, where the child was baptized and the fact recorded in the books."

Sister Damiana — Sophia Ziolk was born on October 18, 1911. She entered the Congregation in 1927. She came in contact with Sister Faustina in Plock in 1932 and then in Cracow. She was a witness at the information process.

[157](#) St. Joseph Church in Podgorze. Rev. Joseph Niemczynski was the pastor at the time.

[158](#) Sister Damiana Ziolk.

[159](#) Probably Sister Alana — Caroline Wilusz, of the Congregation of Servants of the Sacred Heart. She suffered from consumption and had a room near Sister Faustina's. She was born in 1910 and entered her Congregation in 1929.

[160](#) The Saint recalls the date of January 2, 1934, when she had first visited the painter Eugene Kazimierowski to give him directions concerning the painting of the image of The Divine Mercy.

[161](#) The superior of the Servants of the Sacred Heart at the Pradnik hospital was Sister Sebastian — Helen Wasik (1889-1952).

[162](#) Probably Father Andrasz, but it may also have been Father Theodore Czaputa, who visited Sister Faustina in the hospital and heard her confessions.

[163](#) Probably Stanisława Kwietniewska, former ward of the sisters and a patient at the sanatorium at the time.

¹⁶⁴ Sister Faustina was in Tuberculosis Ward 1, which was about 70 steps from the chapel.

¹⁶⁵ Stanisława Kwietniewska (cf. 163).

¹⁶⁶ Sister Faustina is probably praying for the intentions of Archbishop Jalbzykowski, Father Sopocko, and Father Andrasz.

¹⁶⁷ A Eucharistic Congress was held from February 3 to 7 in Manila in the Philippines.

¹⁶⁸ Father Andrasz was Sister Faustina's spiritual director at the time, so it can be supposed that the letter concerning permission for minor penitential practices was written to him.

¹⁶⁹ Probably Sister Faustina has Father Andrasz in mind, as he was her spiritual director at the time, although the words of praise could also refer to Father Sopocko.

¹⁷⁰ "Passion" (Polish *Pasja*) — a lenten service to give worship to Christ's Passion. Special lenten songs *Gorzkie Zale* are sung during the service.

¹⁷¹ On the basis of the invocations that follow, Father Sopocko composed a Litany to The Divine Mercy, correcting a few invocations and adding some of his own (See letter of Fr. Sopocko, May 14, 1972).

¹⁷² As Sister Faustina's spiritual director, Father Sopocko had ordered her to carefully underline in her diary everything that she thought came from God, and in particular everything that related to the institution of the Feast of Mercy and the establishment of the new community.

¹⁷³ Many souls have attained heroic sanctity, and so were saved, never having celebrated the Feast of Divine Mercy. Then, too, according to His revelations to Sr. Faustina, Jesus offers to sinners another extraordinary means as a "last hope of salvation," namely the Divine Mercy Chaplet (cf. *Diary*, 687). The statement made by Our Lord here (965) regarding the Feast of Mercy, therefore, must be seen within the context of the remainder of this passage: "If they will not adore My mercy, they will perish for all eternity," as well as in the light of the statements declared on later occasions: "I give [souls] the last hope of salvation, that is, recourse to My Mercy" (998); and "For them [lukewarm, indifferent souls] the last hope of salvation is to flee to My mercy" (1228). We see that the immediate and solely adequate response to God's mercy on the part of human beings is trust. The attitude of trust is the only means of coming to mercy (cf. 1578) and so, of finding refuge in it. Jesus calls it the "last hope of salvation" for the human soul—literally the "plank or (sheet) anchor," the last refuge for safety (cf. *Webster*).

The Feast of Mercy, therefore, must be seen in this context as an occasion serving as a powerful enticement for sinners to take hold of the promises which Jesus holds out to them in connection with its celebration, motivating [enducing] them to trust that He will be true to them. Expressing that trust, by fulfilling the conditions Jesus gave for receiving on that day [Mercy Sunday] the total forgiveness of sins and punishment as though a "second baptism," will truly be for some souls the last opportunity to be reconciled with God, allowing Him to present them to Himself radiant, "without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27), and so, saved "for all eternity."

¹⁷⁴ Sister Cornelia Trzaska died at Plock on February 15. She was born in 1888, entered the community in 1905, and worked in the Congregation as a shoemaker.

¹⁷⁵ Father Bonaventure Kadeja of the Piarist Order, Cracow, Pijarska Street. He was born in 1906, ordained priest in 1932. In the religious life he had the duties of House Superior, Counselor General, and Provincial. In 1965/66 he was a judge in the information process.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. footnote 65 and Sister Faustina's letter to her sisters Natalie and Wanda of June 10, 1938 (Letters #296, 297).

¹⁷⁷ Probably a prediction that was fulfilled under the German occupation, when many priests secretly celebrated the Eucharist in private homes and basements, without liturgical vestments, and even in concentration camps, wearing prison clothes.

¹⁷⁸ Sister Faustina, while making her monthly day of recollection, took advantage of the conferences which Father Bonaventure Kadeja was giving during a retreat for the sanatorium personnel.

¹⁷⁹ The word "confessors" seems to indicate that the Saint was told to write the Diary not only by Father Sopocko, but also by Father Andrasz.

¹⁸⁰ Sister Faustina's spiritual director, Father Michael Sopocko, remembered her special gifts: visions, illuminations, enlightenments, hearing inner voices, etc. She is referring to one of these gifts here; i.e., interior knowledge of events touching people related to her. (See A. SF. Father Sopocko's letter of March 7, 1972).

¹⁸¹ At the first profession of temporary vows the sisters receive a black veil, a little cross, a rosary and a belt. It is this cross that Sister Faustina meant.

¹⁸² The Feast of The Divine Mercy, on the first Sunday after Easter.

¹⁸³ The chapel of the Congregation was open only to the sisters and wards at the time. It was only during the German occupation that it was opened to the public.

¹⁸⁴ This vision most likely refers to the investigations of the writings of Sister Faustina and the mistaken interpretation of them.

¹⁸⁵ Polish *ciemnica*, literally "dark cell," denotes both the altar of Maundy Thursday liturgy (repository) and the prison in which Jesus spent the night of His Passion.

¹⁸⁶ Probably fragments of the liturgy of the Holy Week.

¹⁸⁷ Father Theodore Czaputa, as the Congregation's chaplain, delivered a sermon in the chapel every Sunday.

¹⁸⁸ The Directress of Novitiate at the time was Sister Callista — Helen Piekarczyk. Born March 30, 1900, she entered the Congregation in 1920. She succeeded Sister Mary Joseph Brzoza as directress on December 10, 1934, and continued until September 8, 1945. She died on September 11, 1947 (A. SMDM-C).

¹⁸⁹ Father Sopocko's article on The Divine Mercy published in the *Vilnius Catholic Weekly* (*Tygodnik Katolicki, nasz przyjaciel*) on April 4, 1937, No. 14.

[190](#) In the Cracow house, the chaplain, Father Theodore Czaputa, had weekly lectures to the sisters on ascetical subjects. These were familiarly called “Catechism.” Sister Faustina probably is referring to one of these.

[191](#) Every year, besides the eight-day retreat, the sisters have a three-day retreat.

[192](#) An eight-day retreat was being held in the house, preceding the profession of vows and taking of the veil (April 20-29). It was conducted by Father Plaza, S.J., Superior of the provincial house at 8 Maly Rynek, Cracow (A. SMDM-C).

[193](#) We do not know to what talks the vision refers. But we know that Father Sopocho sent a memorial on The Divine Mercy to the participants of the First Plenary Synod, which was held at Czestochowa on August 26-27, 1936. The Pope’s delegate, Msgr. Marmaggi presided at the Synod. He probably mentioned the matter of promulgating a Feast of The Divine Mercy in his report of the Synod to the Holy See. That may have caused the disputes. We have reason to suppose that the report drew the interest of Eugene Cardinal Pacelli, Secretary of State (and later, Pope Plus XII). But it is difficult to say what the work could have been. The fact that the notification banning the devotion was not issued by the Holy Office until after his death (November 28, 1958) suggests that Cardinal Pacelli’s attitude toward the devotion to The Divine Mercy was a favorable one.

[194](#) The Ceremonies of Clothing, Temporal and Final Professions took place in the Congregation twice a year at that time: in the spring on the last day of April or first of May, and in the fall on October 30.

[195](#) Only the Holy See has the right to release one from perpetual vows.

[196](#) These words of the Lord Jesus to the Saint attest that, despite the requests to found a new congregation, she is to remain in the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy. The dialog of the Saint with the Lord Jesus, cited on another page of the Diary (see Diary par. 1649), wherein Sister Faustina complains to the Lord Jesus that her Congregation has no saint and receives the reply: you will be that saint, likewise proves this. It is a fact that Sister Faustina remained in the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy until her death, and in reference to the new congregation only gave standing guidelines.

[197](#) The Corpus Christi procession to the four altars. The procession started from the parish church at Borek Falecki and ended at the fourth altar, which was in the Congregation’s garden. The Blessed Sacrament then remained in the sisters’ chapel.

[198](#) The sisters’ procession was always on the Octave of Corpus Christi. The altars were set up and decorated in the garden.

[199](#) Cf. Isidore Borkiewicz, “O stosunku siostry Faustyny do Zgromadzenia Najmilosierniejszego Odkupiciela” (“Sister Faustina’s Connection with the Congregation of the Most Merciful Redeemer”), p. 25.

[200](#) Sister Jolanta, a group instructor in the Vilnius house, was attending a course in pedagogy in Cracow at the time (from July 3, 1937). Sister Jolanta — Aleksandra Wozniak was born in 1909. She entered the Congregation in 1929. She was a group instructor, and then superior at the Radom, Czestochowa, and Cracow houses.

[201](#) The patron saints of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy:

Our Lady of Mercy: August 5
St. Ignatius of Loyola: July 31
St. Joseph: March 19
St. Michael the Archangel: September 29
St. Mary Magdalene: July 22
St. Teresa of Jesus: October 15
St. Anthony of Padua: June 13

[202](#) Many articles appeared in the Polish Catholic press at the time on the ungratefulness of the Polish nation to God and to the Church.

[203](#) A place in the Carpathian hills, where the Congregation has a small vacation house for sisters and girls.

[204](#) Probably Sister Helen, who was the superior of the Rabka house. Sister Helen — Mary Urbanska, born in 1884, entered the Congregation in 1908. She was a nurse and in 1932 took over management of the newly acquired house at Rabka. She died at Rabka on August 6, 1940.

[205](#) “Remember” — a prayer to St. Joseph said daily by the whole Congregation.

[206](#) Perhaps one of the Benedictine Fathers, Kazimierz Ratkiewicz (1906-1965), who was a friend of the sisters in Rabka. The first group of Benedictines arrived in Poland in 1936 and settled in the “Jaworzyna” villa in Rabka, not far from the house of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy called “Loretto.” The Fathers regularly said Masses there, and Father Ratkiewicz busied himself with hearing the sisters’ confessions. He was great friends with “Loretto,” and it is very likely that it was he who heard Sister Faustina’s confession.

[207](#) The novena which is in the Diary was published, with some changes, in a pamphlet called *Chrystus Krol Milosierdzia (Christ King of Mercy)* in 1937, by the J. Cebulski Press, Cracow. The cover had a colored picture representing the Merciful Christ with the rays and the inscription “Jezu, ufam Tobie” (“Jesus, I trust in You”). The contents included the Novena to The Divine Mercy, the Litany and the Chaplet.

The superior of the Cracow house, Mother Irene Krzyzanowska, sent out the leaflet to the other houses of the Congregation. The sisters said the prayers privately, but did not know their origin.

[208](#) According to the Congregation’s custom, the parlor was entered by the superiors or by sisters appointed for that function. Other sisters could go to their guests only by permission of the superior of the house.

[209](#) Reference is to the imprimatur of two publications: 1. An image of Jesus with the Chaplet to The Divine Mercy on the back, for which Fr. Sopocko obtained permission in Vilnius on Sept. 1, 1937 (No. R. 200/ 37); 2. A small pamphlet under the title *Chrystus Krol Milosierdzia (Christ King of Mercy)*, which included the novena, the chaplet and the litany to The Divine Mercy. The imprimatur was granted by the Metropolitan Curia in Cracow (L. 671/37). Both were published by the J. Cebulski Publishing House, 22 Szewska St., Cracow.

[210](#) It is likely that the writer mistakenly recorded August instead of September.

[211](#) Sister Faustina calls the gate a “desert” because the gatekeeper remained separated from the rest of

the Congregation during most of the day.

[212](#) The Saint had two brothers, Stanley and Mecislaus. It later becomes clear that it was Stanley who visited her. He was born at Glogowiec on March 26, 1912. Later he lived in Lodz working as a joiner, a cabinet maker and an organist.

[213](#) *Poslaniec Serca Jezusowego (Messenger of the Sacred Heart)*, a monthly magazine devoted to the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and published by the Jesuit Fathers at the Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy House, 26 Kopernik Street, Cracow.

[214](#) Probably at the shop of Cebulski, where devotional articles were sold.

[215](#) A copy of Eugene Kazimirowski's image of Jesus, made ineptly by a Miss Balzukiewicz in Vilnius for the Redemptorist Fathers. It later appeared in Cracow.

[216](#) Every sister is obliged to participate once a year in an eight-day retreat (so-called "big" retreat, as opposed to the three-day retreat). In the Cracow house the professed sisters took advantage of the retreats given before the ceremonies of taking the veil and professing the vows. In 1937 the retreat was held from October 20 to 29, and was conducted by Father Nitka, S.J. This was Sister Faustina's last retreat together with the sisters.

[217](#) There was a custom in the Congregation of keeping written records of one's interior victories and falls.

[218](#) The taking of the veil and the vows.

[219](#) The cross was probably the illnesses of sisters and of the superior herself. There was a long-drawn flu epidemic in the house and, in addition, the following sisters were seriously ill: Sister Clemens Buczek, head gardener, down with gastric ulcers; Sister Virginia Narkiewicz, taken to the hospital because of serious heart trouble brought on by rheumatism; Sister Dominic Szymanska, seriously ill, died on November 15, 1937.

[220](#) Sister Dominic — Josephine Szymanska. Born November 28, 1875, she entered the Congregation in 1897. She worked in the Cracow house for 30 years as a shoemaker, and became so expert in her job that she trained younger sisters. She died on November 15, 1937.

[221](#) Sister Damiana Ziolek, who wanted to choose Bishop S. Rospond to be her confessor.

[222](#) This is a quotation from the Roman Martyrology, which was read in the refectory after the prayer before meals.

[223](#) *Pasterka* is the Mass at midnight, December 24 to 25. According to the Congregation's custom, the sisters went to bed after the Christmas Eve supper. Those who wanted to pray in the chapel until midnight asked for permission to do so.

[224](#) The Saint most probably had an inner knowledge as to the time of her death. She knew that this would be the final year of her life.

[225](#) At the end of the year the sisters take part in a service of thanksgiving for the graces received,

during which the *Te Deum* is sung. Usually all the sisters participate in the service.

[226](#) The chaplain takes Holy Communion to the sisters who could not take part in the community Mass on account of illness. Those less ill walk to the infirmary at the moment of Communion so as not to trouble the chaplain with visiting every cell.

[227](#) Father Matzanger, S.J., temporarily substituting for the chaplain, Father Theodore Czaputa, who left for a few days to visit his brother, also a priest.

[228](#) Sister Faustina's vision regarding Mother Irene Krzyzanowska came true in so far that Mother Krzyzanowska was a witness at the information process and was probably questioned about Sister Faustina and her writings. Mother Mary Joseph Brzoza, however, died on November 9, 1939, and we do not know whether anyone asked her about Sister Faustina.

[229](#) Probably Sister Gertrude, who was sharing a small room called *separatka* (isolation ward) with Sister Faustina at the time.

Sister Gertrude Budzinska, born 1876, entered the Congregation in 1895. She died in Cracow on August 11, 1966.

[230](#) Probably Sister Liguoria Poznanska, the sacristan and an expert on handiwork, came to teach Sister Gertrude how to make borders for altar linens.

Sister Liguoria Poznanska, born January 15, 1880, entered the Congregation on December 4, 1919. She was sacristan almost all her life as a religious. In 1953 she was appointed assistant to the house superior in Cracow. She died in Cracow on May 2, 1960.

[231](#) It could be that at this particular time the Saint was given to know the day of her death.

[232](#) No date is given, but it can be supposed that the vision occurred between January 8 and 15, 1938.

[233](#) Sister Faustina was very sensitive to the division into choirs. In this case, Sister Seraphina certainly was not guided by the division, but seeing Sister Faustina already wet, she thought it would be easier for Sister Faustina to go to the gate than for another sister to get wet, too. In giving the order she obviously did not know Sister Faustina was unwell, or else she would have done otherwise. Sister Seraphina was a good and pious sister. She was never known to make any differences among the sisters.

[234](#) It was the custom in the Congregation to pray for the dying person the prayer, "O most kind Jesus..." and Psalm 129 "Out of the depths."

[235](#) Sister Faustina's superiors during her lifetime as a religious:

M. Margaret Gimbutt — beginning of novitiate and third probation before perpetual vows;

M. Raphael Buczynska — in Cracow and Warsaw;

M. Rose Klobukowska — in Plock;

M. Xavier Olszamowska — in Kiekrz;

M. Borgia Tichy — in Vilnius;

M. Seraphina Kukulska — in Walendow.

Sister Xavier — Jane Olszamowska, born 1883, entered the Congregation in 1912. She was superior in Kiekrz and in Warsaw, and then was secretary general. She died on March 11, 1970, in Cracow.

²³⁶ Cf. Bishop Zbigniew Kraszewski, “Udział Matki Bożej w Dziele Odkupienia” (“The Role of the Mother of God in the Work of Redemption”) in *Gratia Plena*, Poznan, 1965.

²³⁷ Probably Father M. Sopocho, because he was chiefly active in spreading the devotion of The Divine Mercy and in efforts to found the new community; but Sister Faustina may also have had in mind Father Andrasz or Mother Irene Krzyzanowska, because they, too, made efforts to spread the devotion of The Divine Mercy.

²³⁸ Father Theodore Czaputa was the confessor of the novitiate. Some of the professed sisters also made their confession to him. The Saint’s spiritual director was Father Andrasz. Sister Faustina is careful to make the distinction.

²³⁹ Sister Tarcisia — Casimira Piotrowicz. Born in 1891, she entered the Congregation in 1912. For a short time she was a nurse in the Cracow house.

²⁴⁰ Probably Sister Amelia, who was Sister Faustina’s close friend.
Sister Amelia — Stanislava Socha was born on May 15, 1911. She entered the Congregation in 1930. The doctors soon diagnosed she had tuberculosis of the bones in her hand. Sister Amelia was afraid of being a burden to the Congregation and asked Sister Faustina to pray for an early death for her. Sister Faustina promised that, within a year after her, Sister Amelia would also die. That was the case, as Sister Amelia died on October 4, 1939.

²⁴¹ Carnival — a time of revelry and merrymaking before the Lenten Season.

²⁴² A doctor called in to see the sick sisters. It is hard to say which one. A Dr. Stoch came frequently.

²⁴³ Probably Dr. Silberg, who knew Sister Faustina’s condition.

²⁴⁴ To the hospital for contagious diseases at Pradnik near Cracow, known as the “sanatorium.”

²⁴⁵ There is a corridor leading from the house to the choir loft of the chapel. Sister Faustina was in the choir loft and so attended Mass, but she was not strong enough to go down and take part in the procession with the palms.

²⁴⁶ Father Zukowicz, S.J., who was celebrating Mass that day. He was assistant to the provincial for very many years. He was a close friend of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy. As a great benefactor of their apostolic work, he often visited the girls and brought them small gifts.

²⁴⁷ Sister Casimir — Irene Twarowska. Born 1911, she entered the Congregation in 1933. She worked as a group instructor and then as the head of the home for girls. She died in Cracow on April 18, 1969.

²⁴⁸ The following sisters had been in the novitiate with Sister Faustina:

Senior novices: Sister Alice Dabrowska, Sister Cherubim Kowieska, Sister Ernest Szczyrba, Sister Yvonne Goebel, Sister Joachim Gluc, Sister Kinga, Sister Crescentia Bogdanik, Sister Laurenta Kosinska, Sister Longina Suchomska, Sister Lucine, Sister Natalie Fiszer, Sister Placida Putyra, Sister Renata Jodlowska, Sister Simon Nalewajko, Sister Valentina Leszczynska.

Junior novices: Sister Anunciata Peraj, Sister Bernarda Wilczek, Sister Celine Bronikowska, Sister Felicia Zakowiecka, Sister Justine Golofit, Sister Clementine Gluc, Sister Louise Gadzina, Sister Martina, Sister Regina Jaworska, Sister Severina Marciniak, Sister Teresita, Sister Zenobia Saja.

Sisters who were clothed together with Sr. Faustina: Sister Bernadette Federowicz, Sister Bonaventure Edelmänn-Głowacka (d. Dec. 17, 1936), Sister Florentine Pajak (d. Jan. 2, 1950), Sister Henry Skulimowska (d. Oct. 20, 1974).

Sisters who corresponded with Sr. Faustina: Sister Justine Golofit, Sister Louise Gadzina, Sister Regina Jaworska; perhaps there were others, but at present they are unknown.

[249](#) Sisters of the Congregation of Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, who worked at the hospital at Pradnik. The Congregation had been founded in Cracow in 1894 by Bishop Peiczar.

[250](#) Sister David Cedro; Sister Alana — Caroline Wilusz, born July 20, 1910; Sister Medarda — Caroline Podrazik, born June 16, 1910, died 1966.

[251](#) Similar incidents can be found in the lives of saints; for example, St. Stanislaus Kostka and St. Bonaventure.

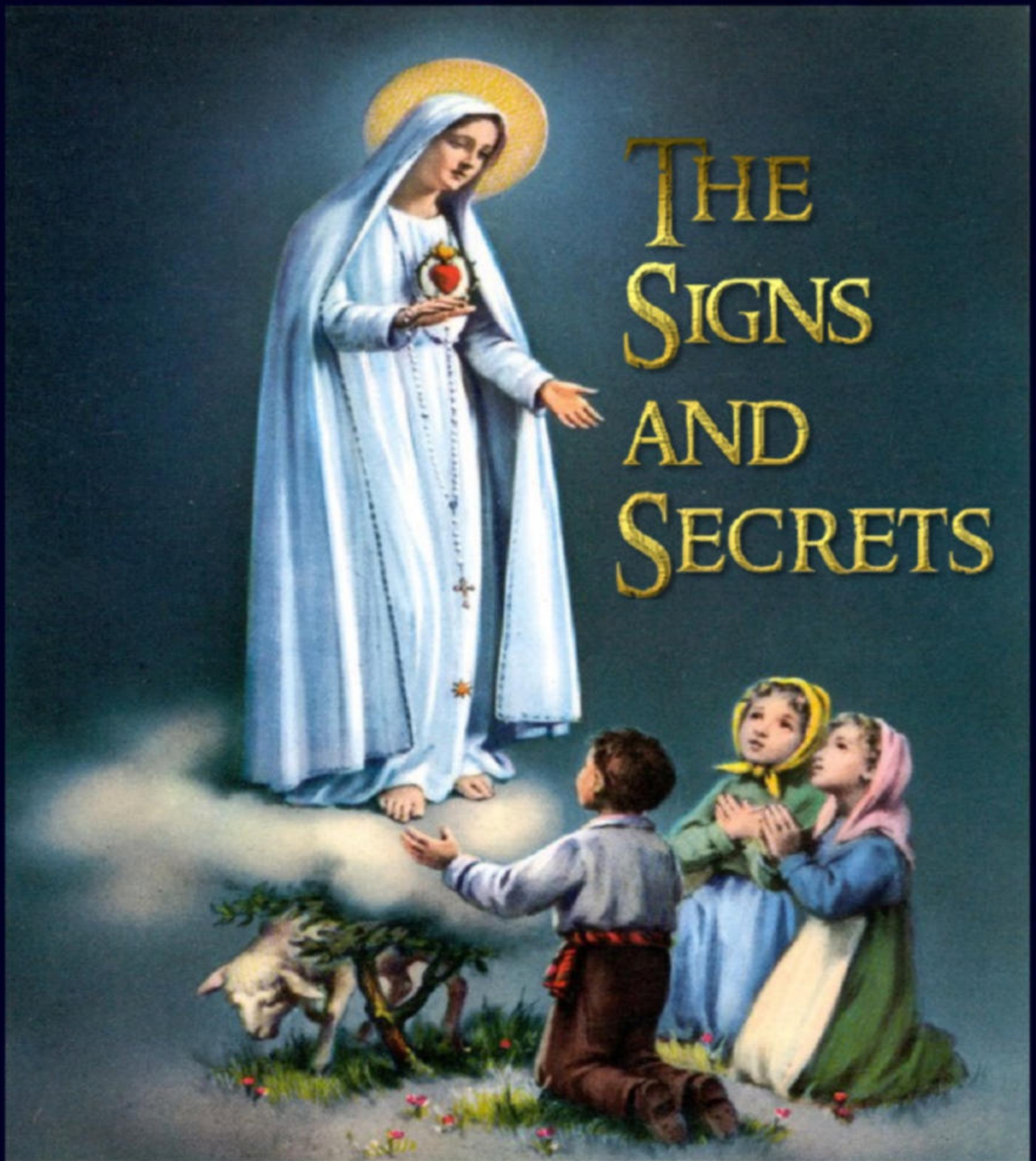
[252](#) Low Sunday. The Sunday mentioned by Sister Faustina was the first Sunday after Easter; that is, the day that was to be the Feast of The Divine Mercy.

[253](#) Probably a reference to the flu epidemic which had begun in February and continued for several months. As many as 22 sisters were down on some days.

[254](#) It is difficult to establish the date. Sister Faustina no longer dates anything but merely writes, “today.” At any rate, this was after Pentecost; that is, after June 5.

[255](#) It can be supposed that Sister Faustina had the vision of the Heart of Jesus on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi; i.e., on June 24, 1938.

FATIMA



Marianna Bartold

Fatima: The Signs and Secrets

Marianna Bartold

“In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and said: I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, **because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.**”
-Lk. 10:21.

All Scriptural quotations were taken from the Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims translation, with revisions and footnotes (in the text in italics) by Bishop Richard Challoner, 1749-52. Taken from a hardcopy of the 1899 Edition by the John Murphy Company. IMPRIMATUR: James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, September 1, 1899.

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Fatima's Prophetic Mission: St. Michael and the Great Battle in Heaven

“We would be mistaken to think that Fatima’s *prophetic* mission is complete.” [1] Those words, uttered by Pope Benedict XVI during his May 2010 homily at Fatima, gave the Church a stupendously thought-provoking insight. Only three years earlier, on the 90th anniversary of Fatima, the Pope had said something similar: “The apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima...are without doubt, the most *prophetic* of all modern apparitions.” [2] Before him, Pope John Paul II acknowledged that his own predecessors gave Our Lady of Fatima special recognition, because her messages were more *prophetic* than any previous Marian apparitions which were approved by the Church as worthy of belief. He also said in his sermon of May 13, 1982 that “Fatima places an obligation on the Church.” Certainly, Popes of the Roman Catholic Church do not say such things of mere private revelations, which impose on the Church no such duty.

Of Fatima, it can be truly said that no other Church-approved apparition has received such world-wide attention or has been the subject of such controversy within the Church herself. It is not that the Church doesn’t recognize Fatima as worthy of belief, because the decision in favor of Fatima was made in 1930. Rather, the internal debate among the Church’s members, high and low, center on two subjects: The Virgin’s request that a reigning Pope and the world’s bishops solemnly consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart and also on what is called “The Third Secret of Fatima.”

In 1984, Pope Benedict XVI (then Cardinal Ratzinger, and now Bishop Emeritus of Rome) said that “the things contained in this 'Third Secret' correspond to what has been announced in Scripture and has been said again and again in many other Marian apparitions, beginning with the Fatima apparitions in their *known* contents.” [3] Since the Third Secret of Fatima corresponds to Scripture, it must be said that the Church knows all scriptural prophecies are fulfilled—*except those foretelling the “last days.”*

However, as previously mentioned, in May 2010, Pope Benedict XVI purposely chose to use the descriptive term “prophetic” in defining Fatima’s

“mission.” So let us look to the meaning of these words as the Church provides them:

“**Prophecy**: A definite prediction of a future event which depends on the free will of God or man, and therefore can be known only by divine revelation. Some prophecies are conditional...Others are unconditional; for example, Christ foretold His death and resurrection...Christ Himself often appealed to prophecies as proof of His divinity and divine *mission*.” [4]

As for “**mission**,” the root meaning of this word is “sending.” [5] As it is used in ecclesiastical and theological writing, a “mission” (a *sending*) is usually accomplished in at least one of three distinct ways. As will be seen, all three of the following definitions of the word “mission” appear to apply to the Fatima revelations:

- First, a “mission” is a place to which missionaries are *sent* by the Church to establish the Faith “**where the majority are not yet converted or have fallen away from the Faith.**” [6] Missionary work “for the conversion of infidels has always been an important part of the Church’s work, since Christ *sent* the Apostles to preach to all nations and to make all men His disciples.” [7]

- Second, a “mission” is a “series of sermons and religious exercises conducted in a parish over a certain period of a number of days by priests *sent* into the parish to renew the religious fervor of the faithful. **To renew the Christian Faith and practice of Catholics**, the sermons and instructions of a mission usually deal with the fundamentals of the Christian life: the purpose of man; sin; redemption; the justice, mercy, love, and graces of God; death; hell; and heaven.” [8]

- Third and most significant, a “**mission**” is a **direct action (a “divine sending”) made by God Himself for the salvation of His people**. The Holy Scriptures infallibly record that “the Son is *sent* into the world by the Father, [9] and that the Holy Ghost is *sent* by both the Father and the Son [10]—but in no place in the Scriptures do we read of the Father being *sent* into the world. Hence, theologians use the term divine *mission*, or ‘sending,’ to designate the procession of one Divine Person from another in the Holy Trinity with the connotation of some effect of the procession in creatures, through a new presence of the Divine Person in that creature.” [11]

Who the Holy Trinity

Sent to Fatima

At Fatima, the very first creature *sent* by the Holy Trinity was an angel

who identified himself as “the Angel of Peace” and later as “the Angel Guardian” of Portugal. [12] The angel’s three appearances to the young shepherd children were a prelude to the Virgin Mary’s later visits. It can be stated with moral certainty that this angel is none other than St. Michael the Archangel, whose very presence at Fatima provides the initial and great insights into what Pope Benedict XVI called “Fatima’s prophetic mission.”

For almost one thousand years, St. Michael has been recognized by the Catholic nation of Portugal as its Angel Guardian and the Angel of Peace. Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, historian and expert on the Fatima apparitions, observed “that good Portuguese historians are inclined to recognize in him [Fatima’s Angel of Peace] St. Michael the Archangel, their patron and protector, who had always been venerated as the Guardian Angel of their country...King Alfonso Henriques [1139-1185], founder of the nation and of the dynasty, having been baptized in a chapel dedicated to St. Michael, chose the Archangel as the special protector of his armies and his kingdom.” In 1514, at the request of King Manuel I, Pope Leo X granted the Portuguese nation a special feast in honor of their Angel Guardian, traditionally recognized as St. Michael. In Portugal’s national monastery at Batalha, “the monks chanted each day an antiphon and prayer in honor of St. Michael, the Guardian Angel of Portugal.”

Frère Michel additionally notes, “Fr. Martins dos Reis [another Fatima historian/author] has observed that the other title by which the Angel of Fatima revealed himself—‘I am the Angel of Peace’—also suggests his identification with St. Michael the Archangel. Indeed, in the Portuguese tradition, where he is quite prominent, St. Michael is often called the Angel of Peace, especially in the liturgical office of St. Elizabeth of Portugal.” Finally, Frère Michel concludes, “In addition, in the Roman Breviary as well as in the litanies, the Archangel is invoked under these titles: ‘Auctor pacis,’ (Author of Peace) and “Angelus pacis Michael,” (Michael, the Angel of Peace). [13]

It seems that it was this Angel of Peace—St. Michael the Archangel—who was *sent* to the little ones at Fatima “to fill them with a very elevated mystical grace, by which they felt themselves penetrated by the Divine Presence.” [14]

St. Michael, from *Genesis* to the *Apocalypse*

And so, we may ask —**who is St. Michael and why was he sent to the three Fatima children?** Like all angels, he is a pure spirit (without a body),

created by God. Both St. Augustine and Pope St. Gregory the Great state that “*angel* is the name of an office,” but the word *angel* “expresses neither their essential nature nor their essential function; viz.: that of attendants upon God’s throne...” [15]

“Angel” means “messenger,” and so an angel acts as a divine messenger sent by God. The Holy Scriptures reveal that God sends angels to announce His will, to correct, punish, teach, rebuke, or console. [16] Angels appear in the Holy *Bible* from beginning to end, from *Genesis* through the *Apocalypse*.

The Scriptures further disclose that the angels are not all equal to each other. [17] It is commonly taught that there exists a hierarchy (an order) of the angels, known as the nine choirs. The nine choirs are divided into three “triads” (i.e., a group of three; a trio).

The highest triad consists of the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones; their specific concern or purpose is the contemplation of God. The middle triad is made of the dominions, virtues, and powers, who are appointed to concern themselves with the order of the universe but also other causes. Finally, the last (or “lowest”) triad is of principalities, archangels and angels. Amongst the specific concerns of this last triad is the welfare of the people, and it is to this choir that St. Michael belongs.

What is an archangel? The meaning of this word, which comes from the Greek, is “prince-angel.” Although he is in the last order of angels, St. Michael the Archangel became Prince of the Heavenly Host [18] because he was the first to rise up against Lucifer and the other angels who rebelled against God. It was St. Michael who cried out, “Who is like unto God?” and it was he and his angels who “smote the rebel Lucifer and his followers in the conflict of the heavenly host.” [19] The fallen angels were cast from heaven and condemned to hell. [20]

Five times is the name of Michael the angel explicitly mentioned in the Holy Scriptures—three times by the prophet Daniel, once by St. Jude, and once by St. John in the *Apocalypse*. All of these passages provide further enlightenment about why the great St. Michael the Archangel was sent to the Fatima children:

- **In the Prophecy of Daniel**, Chapter 10, the Holy Scriptures give Michael’s name for the first time. Daniel’s chapters 7-12 are considered to be his four “apocalyptic” chapters because, like the later *Apocalypse*, they foretell things that were, things that are, and things that shall be. What is also made clear in these same four chapters is Daniel’s reliance on heavenly

creatures, *sent* to him by God, who **explain** the visions given to him.

Beginning with Chapters 7 and 8, Daniel wrote the first of his prophetic and apocalyptic visions. Explanations of these visions were given by the angel Gabriel, [21] who appeared to him as a man. In Chapter 10, it is recorded: “In the third year of Cyrus king of the Persians, a word was revealed to Daniel surnamed Baltassar, and a true word, and great strength: and he *understood* the word: for there is *need of understanding* in a vision.” [22] Following this event, the prophet Daniel mourned and fasted for 21 days. [23]

(These words from Holy Scripture provide insight into the Great Secret of Fatima, especially the Third Secret Vision which, like Daniel’s vision, could be described in the same way: “a word was revealed to Lucia, surnamed dos Santos, and to Francisco and Jacinta, surnamed Marto; and a true word, and great strength; and they *understood* the word: for there is *need of understanding* in a vision.” In other words, the children of Fatima, like the prophet Daniel, heard words to explain the two visions within the “Great Secret” they were given by God. In a similar manner, they also would make personal sacrifices to God in reparation for sin.)

Then appeared a good angel (whose name is not given by Daniel, but who may have been Gabriel returning to the prophet), saying, “Daniel, thou man of desires, understand the words that I speak to thee, and stand upright: for I am **sent** now to thee.” [24] After speaking of Daniel’s prayers and sacrifices, the angel revealed, “I am come for thy words,” [25] and then declared, “But the prince of the kingdom of the Persians resisted me one and twenty days; and behold **Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me, and I remained there by the king of the Persians. But I am come to teach thee what things shall befall thy people in the latter days, for as yet the vision is for days.” [26]

It must first be explained that “the prince of the kingdom of the Persians” was a fallen angel, a demon of great power who resisted the good angel for 21 days—i.e., a full three weeks. A mere human could not continue to resist one of God’s angels for such a length of time, but a demon of great strength could. We know that many angels became corrupted, resisted the Holy Trinity, and eternally lost their places in Heaven. Although forever darkened, they retained their powers of intellect, strength, and hierarchical order. St. Paul tells us, “Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and

blood; but against **principalities** and **powers**, against the **rulers of the world of this darkness**, against the **spirits of wickedness** in the **high places**.” [27] The *Douay-Rheims* Bible translation includes a note to this verse, which states: “*In the high places*: or heavenly places. That is to say, in the air, the lowest of the celestial regions; in which God permits these wicked spirits or fallen angels to wander.”

Our Lord Himself, when rebuking the Pharisees for attributing His miracles to Satan, speaks of the differing degrees of wickedness among the demons: “And when an unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits **more wicked than himself**, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation.” [28] Thus we understand that individuals, rulers, regions or countries which reject the Triune God and the one religion by which He wishes to be adored and glorified most certainly open themselves to demonic rule.

To return to the prophet Daniel, he had for 21 days fasted and prayed in reparation to the Lord, for he had seen a great and terrifying vision of what would befall his people. Although he understood the vision, he did not yet know that it was a vision “for days”—meaning far into the future, the end times. The 21 days were thrice the ancient custom of seven days’ of fasting, which tell us that Daniel’s 21 days of sacrifice displayed extreme sorrow and extraordinary penance. Unbeknownst to Daniel, the 21 days of his penance and reparation offered to God coincided with the angel’s battle with a powerfully resistant devil, the “prince of the kingdom of the Persians.” However, it becomes clear that Daniel’s acts of reparation were accepted by God, for the angel spoke of Daniel’s sacrifices and also told him, almost in a confiding manner, of his own struggle against the “prince” (meaning leader, one of a higher order) demon of the Persians. Since angels of Heaven do not engage in idle gossip or expect human sympathy, it is also certain that God wished Daniel to know what had transpired and that, due to his own prayers and penances, St. Michael was *sent* by God to assist the good but lesser angel.

At the end of the same chapter, the good angel declares: “But I will tell thee what is set down in the scripture of truth: and none is my helper in all

these things, but **Michael your prince.**” [29] Once again, Scripture attests that Michael is a prince. Even further, the angel states to Daniel that Michael is “your prince,” meaning the prince of the elect, those who belong to God’s kingdom on earth and follow His commandments. In the Old Testament, the chosen people were those of the earthly Israel, but this ancient nation was a living figure-type of the spiritual Israel (today known as the Roman Catholic Church) that would be established by the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

- Michael’s name is mentioned a third time in *The Prophecy of Daniel*, when the good angel speaks of the last events of the end times (the *Novissimi*), the time when anti-Christ shall appear and persecute God’s people: “But at that time shall **Michael** rise up, the great prince, who standeth for the children of thy people: and a time shall come such as never was from the time that nations began even until that time. (**Author’s note:** One sentence from the 1973 message of Our Lady of Akita is remarkably similar to this Scriptural prophecy, as one will see in [another section](#) of this book.) And at that time shall thy people be saved, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake: some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always.” [30]

- **In the Epistle of St. Jude:** “When **Michael the archangel**, disputing with the devil, contended about the body of Moses, he durst not bring against him the judgment of railing speech, but said: *The Lord command thee.*” [31]

First, this Scripture passage explicitly reveals that Michael belongs to the order of the archangels.

Second, the quotation helps us grasp the difference between the proper honor due to one of God’s chosen creatures and the worship due to God Himself. According to Origen, St. Jude referred to an ancient Jewish tradition, made known by revelation, that St. Michael concealed the tomb of Moses at God’s command, because Satan moved to incite the ancient Hebrews against honoring the body of Moses as a precious relic; rather, the devil planned to deceive them into worshiping Moses’ body with the worship meant only for God. [32]

Third, it is implicitly understood that Michael was *sent* by God to give the devil a command that came from the Lord and not from himself.

- **In the Apocalypse of St. John:** “And there was a great battle in heaven, **Michael** and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: And they prevailed not, neither was their place found

any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night.” [33]

In writing of this epic war in heaven, St. John “speaks of the great conflict at the *end of time*, which reflects also the battle in heaven at the *beginning* of time.” [34] This is known because, in apocalyptic symbolism, the word “heaven” means “the Church,” [35] God’s kingdom on earth. In other words, there shall be a great battle *in the Church*, between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels—a last war so great that it mirrors the first, terrible combat between the good and fallen angels.

Another consideration is the Venerable Bede’s interpretation, summarized in *The Book of Destiny*: “If ‘heaven’ is the Church on earth in the *Apocalypse*...[t]he angels who fight under the leadership of Michael are the loyal bishops and priests of the Church, while the angels of the dragon are the sinful priests and bishops.” [36] In the final battle of the last days, states Butler’s *Lives of the Saints*, “when Antichrist shall have set up his kingdom on earth, it is St. Michael who will unfurl once more the standard of the cross, sound the last trumpet, bind together the false prophet and the beast and hurl them for all eternity into the burning pool.” [37]

Too, the Church Fathers believe that other parts of Holy Scripture allude to St. Michael’s presence, although his name is not openly given. For example, the Fathers believe Michael “was the cherub who stood at the gate of paradise, ‘to keep the way of the tree of life,’ [38] the angel through whom God published the Decalogue to his chosen people, the angel who stood in the way against Balaam, [39] [and] the angel [40] who routed the army of Sennacherib.” [41]

Through Scripture and Tradition, God has revealed to the universal Church that St. Michael is the prince and guardian of His people. Catholic Tradition also teaches that St. Michael fulfills the four following offices:

1) Michael, as God’s first loyal defender, fights against Satan while this world lasts.

2) Michael is the rescuer of the souls of the faithful from the power of the enemy, especially at the hour of death.

3) Michael is the champion of God's people—“the Jews in the Old

Dispensation, the Christians of the New; therefore he is the patron of the Church, and of the orders of knights during the Middle Ages.” [42]

4) Michael is the Angel of Judgment, calling souls away from earth and bringing them to the Throne of God.

It is this same great archangel whom God *sent* to Fatima; Michael, Prince of the Heavenly Host, chosen to precede the “great sign” that would appear in heaven (the Church)—*the* “woman clothed with the sun.” [43]

A Foreshadowing at Fatima

How did the Fatima apparitions begin? Lucia dos Santos, the seventh and youngest child of Antonio and Maria Rosa dos Santos, was seven years old when she became shepherdess to the family’s flock. While together with three other neighboring shepherd children, Lucia and her friends thrice saw a mysterious figure in the air, like a statue made of snow. This figure is believed to be a presage of the angelic apparitions that Lucia would later behold with her younger cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, both of whom are now *beati* (called “Blessed” by the Church). Lucia and her cousins would, in the spring and summer of 1916, receive three clear apparitions of the Angel, who literally identified himself as “*the Angel of Peace*” and “*Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal.*”

Years later, Lucia (who became a nun) would under obedience to her bishop, Jose Alves Correia da Silva, write a series of memoirs, which were later published as a collection under the title, “Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words.” The Bishop of Leira made this request when, in 1935, the body of her younger cousin, the child Jacinta, was exhumed from the grave and her face was found incorrupt. After the bishop sent a photograph of Jacinta’s opened casket to Lucia in the convent, Lucia sent a letter of thanks that also humbly declared her own conviction of Jacinta’s holiness.

According to Fr. Thomas McGlynn, O.P. who, under Lucia’s direction, made a statue of Our Lady of Fatima, Lucia’s thank-you letter “aroused the Bishop’s curiosity—perhaps many graces given to the children had been hidden all these years. He, therefore, commanded Lucia to write her memoirs.” [44] Each memoir led to a further order to write another, resulting in four memoirs, all written in a diary-like form but addressed to the bishop. These memoirs were written between 1936 and 1941 (Memoir I was written in 1936; Memoir II was written in 1937; Memoirs III and IV were both written in 1941). [45]

In these accounts, Lucia wrote about her cousins’ lives, her own, the

angelic portents of 1915 followed by angelic visitations in 1916, sacrifices her cousins offered to God, the apparitions of Our Lady in 1917, and a few later appendices about apparitions and locutions she received as a nun. The memoirs are in addition to other correspondence to her superiors regarding the apparitions and the “Great Secret” of Fatima, in its three distinct parts. Recalling how the angel apparition began, she related:

“News that I was beginning my life as a shepherdess spread rapidly among the other shepherds; almost all of them came and offered to be my companions. I said 'Yes' to everybody, and arranged with each one to meet on the slopes of the serra. Next day, the serra was a solid mass of sheep with their shepherds, as though a cloud had descended upon it. But I felt ill at ease in the midst of such a hubbub. I therefore chose three companions from among the shepherds, and without saying a word to anyone, we arranged to pasture our sheep on the opposite slopes. These were the three I chose: Teresa Matias, her sister Maria Rosa and Maria Justino. On the following day, we set out in the direction of a hill known as the Cabego. We went up the northern slope. Valinhos, a place that Your Excellency already knows by name, is on the southern side of the same hill. On the eastern slope is the cave I have already spoken of, in my account of Jacinta. Together with our flocks, we climbed almost to the top of the hill. At our feet lay a wide expanse of trees—olives, oaks, pines, holmoaks, and so on, that stretched away down towards the level valley below.”

“Around midday, we ate our lunch. After this, I invited my companions to pray the Rosary with me, to which they eagerly agreed. We had hardly begun when, there before our eyes, we saw a figure poised in the air above the trees; it looked like a statue made of snow, rendered almost transparent by the rays of the sun.”

‘What is that?’ asked my companions, quite frightened.

‘I don't know!’

“We went on praying, with our eyes fixed on the figure before us, and as we finished our prayer, the figure disappeared. As was usual with me, I resolved to say nothing; but my companions told their families what had happened the very moment they reached home. The news soon spread, and one day when I arrived home, my mother questioned me:

‘Look here! They say you've seen I don't know what, up there. What was it you saw?’

‘I don't know,’ and as I could not explain it myself, I went on: ‘It looked

like a person wrapped up in a sheet!’ As I meant to say that I couldn't discern its features, I added: ‘You couldn't make out any eyes, or hands, on it.’

“My mother put an end to the whole matter with a gesture of disgust: ‘Childish nonsense!’

“After some time, we returned with our flocks to the same place, and the very same thing happened again. My companions once more told the whole story. After a brief interval, the same thing was repeated. It was the third time that my mother heard all these things being talked about outside, without my having said a single word about them at home. She called me, therefore, quite displeased, and demanded:

‘Now, let us see! What is it that you girls say you saw over there?’

‘I don't know, Mother. I don't know what it is!’

“Some people started making fun of us. My sisters, recalling that for some time after my First Communion I had been quite abstracted, used to ask me rather scornfully:

‘Do you see someone wrapped in a sheet?’

“I felt these contemptuous words and gestures very keenly, as up to now I had been used to nothing but caresses. But this was nothing, really. You see, I did not know what the good Lord had in store for me in the future.” [\[46\]](#)

Three Cousins See the Angel, 1916

Lucia's memoirs also relate that a year later, sometime in the spring of 1916, “Francisco and Jacinta sought and obtained permission from their parents to start taking care of their own flock. So I left my good companions, and I joined my cousins, Francisco and Jacinta, instead. To avoid going to the serra with all the other shepherds, we arranged to pasture our flocks on properties belonging to my uncle and aunt and my parents.

“One fine day, we set out with our sheep for some land that my parents owned, which lay at the foot of the eastern slope of the hill that I have already mentioned. This property was called Chousa Velha. Soon after our arrival, about midmorning, a fine drizzle began to fall, so fine that it seemed like mist. We went up the hillside, followed by our flocks, looking for an overhanging boulder where we could take shelter. Thus it was for the first time that we entered this blessed hollow among the rocks. It stood in the middle of an olive grove belonging to my godfather Anastacio. From there, you could see the little village where I was born, my parents' home, and the hamlets of Casa Velha and Eira da Pedra. The olive grove, owned by several people, extended to within the confines of the hamlets themselves. We spent

the day there among the rocks, in spite of the fact that the rain was over and the sun was shining bright and clear. We ate our lunch and said our Rosary. I'm not sure whether we said it that day in the way I have already described to Your Excellency, saying just the word *Hail Mary* and *Our Father* on each bead, so great was our eagerness to get to our play! Our prayer finished, we started to play 'pebbles'!"

"We had enjoyed the game for a few moments only, when a strong wind began to shake the trees. We looked up, startled, to see what was happening, for the day was unusually calm. Then we saw coming towards us, above the olive trees, the figure I have already spoken about. Jacinta and Francisco had never seen it before, nor had I ever mentioned it to them. As it drew closer, we were able to distinguish its features. It was a young man, about fourteen or fifteen years old, whiter than snow, transparent as crystal when the sun shines through it, and of great beauty. On reaching us, he said:

'Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.'

"Kneeling on the ground, he bowed down until his forehead touched the ground, and made us repeat these words three times:

'My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love Thee! I ask pardon of Thee for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love Thee.'

Then, rising, he said: **'Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.'**

"His words engraved themselves so deeply on our minds that we could never forget them. From then on, we used to spend long periods of time, prostrate like the Angel, repeating his words, until sometimes we fell, exhausted. I warned my companions, right away, that this must be kept secret and, thank God, they did what I wanted.

"Some time passed, and summer came, when we had to go home for siesta. One day, we were playing on the stone slabs of the well down at the bottom of the garden belonging to my parents, which we called the Arneiro... Suddenly, we saw beside us the same figure, or rather Angel, as it seemed to me.

'What are you doing?' he asked. 'Pray, pray very much! The most holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High.'

'How are we to make sacrifices?' I asked.

'Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act

of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission, the suffering which the Lord will send you.'

"A considerable time had elapsed, when one day we went to pasture our sheep on a property belonging to my parents, which lay on the slope of the hill I have mentioned, a little higher up than Valinhos. It is an olive grove called Pregueira. After our lunch, we decided to go and pray in the hollow among the rocks on the opposite side of the hill. To get there, we went around the slope, and had to climb over some rocks above the Pregueira. The sheep could only scramble over these rocks with great difficulty.

"As soon as we arrived there, we knelt down, with our foreheads touching the ground, and began to repeat the prayer of the Angel: 'My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love Thee...' I don't know how many times we had repeated this prayer, when an extraordinary light shone upon us. We sprang up to see what was happening, and beheld the Angel. He was holding a chalice in his left hand, with the Host suspended above it, from which some drops of blood fell into the chalice. Leaving the chalice suspended in the air, the Angel knelt down beside us and made us repeat three times:

'O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore Thee profoundly, and I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences with which He Himself is offended. And, through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart, and those of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of all poor sinners.'

"Then, rising, he took the chalice and the Host in his hands. He gave the Sacred Host to me, and shared the Blood from the chalice between Jacinta and Francisco, saying as he did so:

'Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.'

"Once again, he prostrated on the ground and repeated with us, three times more, the same prayer '*Most Holy Trinity...*' and then disappeared.

"We remained a long time in this position, repeating the same words over and over again. When at last we stood up, we noticed that it was already

dark, and therefore time to return home.”

It was the last time the three children saw the Angel, but they did not tell anyone of him. Francisco would ask Lucia questions because, as she and Jacinta had discovered, he could see the angel but he could not hear his words. The same would also occur with the later apparitions of the Virgin Mary.

After the first visitation of the Angel, as Lucia said, “It did not occur to us to speak about this Apparition, nor did we think of recommending that it be kept secret; the very Apparition itself imposed secrecy. It was so intimate, that it was not easy to speak of it at all.” She would also write, “The supernatural atmosphere which enveloped us was so intense, that we were for a long time scarcely aware of our own existence...The presence of God made itself felt so intimately and so intensely that we did not even venture to speak to one another. Next day, we were still immersed in this spiritual atmosphere.”

As for the final vision of the Angel of Peace, Lucia would later confide in her memoirs, “Impelled by the power of the supernatural that enveloped us, we imitated all that the Angel had done, prostrating ourselves on the ground as he did and repeating the prayers that he said. The force of the presence of God was so intense that it absorbed and almost completely annihilated us. It seemed to deprive us even of the use of our bodily senses for a considerable length of time. During those days, we performed all our exterior actions as though guided by that same supernatural being who was impelling us thereto. The peace and happiness which we felt were great, but wholly interior, for our souls were completely immersed in God.” [\[47\]](#)

PART 2

The Signs at Fatima, May-September 1917

“I dwelt in the highest places, and my throne is in a pillar of a cloud.”
–*Ecclesiasticus 24:7*

When people think about the Fatima apparitions, most recall in their minds a particular image of Our Lady, dressed all in white, standing with her bare feet upon a white puff of cloud. Rarely, one may see a holy card or picture of Our Lady of Fatima, with a backdrop of a twilight sky scattered with stars. What is not generally known is that the delicate white mist of cloud under the Virgin’s feet, the changed sky, and the stars are not artistic embellishments. People who came to the Fatima apparitions witnessed the unusual white cloud and other phenomena, all which hold a “highly symbolic and mystical significance.” [\[48\]](#)

Our Lady’s first visit to a small hamlet called Fatima, Portugal took place when the sun was directly overhead (called solar noon) on Sunday, May 13, 1917. Appearing in an open field known as the Cova da Iria (the Cove of Irene), “a Lady dressed all in white” stood lightly atop a *carrasqueira*, a young holmoak sapling that stood about three feet high and bore glossy, green leaves. On that day, the Lady appeared to three young children—Lucia dos Santos (age 10) and her two younger cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto (ages 9 and 7, respectively), and she asked them to return each month through October, “on the 13th day, at this same hour” [\[49\]](#) (solar noon). Promising to later give her name, she said only of herself, “I am of Heaven.” [\[50\]](#)

In her memoirs, Lucia briefly related the first apparition:

“High up on the slope in the Cova da Iria, I was playing with Jacinta and Francisco at building a little stone wall around a clump of furze. Suddenly we saw what seemed to be a flash of lightning.

‘We’d better go home,’ I said to my cousins, ‘that’s lightning; we may have a thunderstorm.’

‘Yes, indeed!’ they answered.

“We began to go down the slope, hurrying the sheep along towards the road. We were more or less half-way down the slope, and almost level with a large holmoak tree that stood there, when we saw another flash of

lightning. We had only gone a few steps further when, there before us on a small holmoak, we beheld a Lady all dressed in white. She was more brilliant than the sun, and radiated a light more clear and intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water, when the rays of the burning sun shine through it.

“We stopped, astounded, before the Apparition. We were so close, just a few feet from her, that we were bathed in the light which surrounded her, or rather, which radiated from her. Then Our Lady spoke to us:

‘Do not be afraid. I will do you no harm.’

‘Where does your Grace come from?’

‘I am of Heaven.’

‘What does Your Grace want of me?’

‘I have come to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the 13th day, at this same hour. Later on, I will tell you who I am and what I want. Afterwards, I will return here yet a seventh time.’

‘Shall I go to Heaven too?’

‘Yes, you will.’

‘And Jacinta?’

‘She will go also.’

‘And Francisco?’

‘He will go there too, but he must say many Rosaries.’

“Then I remembered to ask about two girls who had died recently. They were friends of mine and used to come to my home to learn weaving with my eldest sister.

‘Is Maria das Neves in Heaven?’

‘Yes, she is.’ (I think she was about 16 years old).

‘And Amelia?’

‘She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world.’ (It seems to me that she was between 18 and 20 years of age).

‘Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?’

‘Yes, we are willing.’

‘Then you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort.’

“As she pronounced these last words ‘...the grace of God will be your comfort,’ Our Lady opened her hands for the first time, communicating to us

a light so intense that, as it streamed from her hands, its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors. Then, moved by an interior impulse that was also communicated to us, we fell on our knees, repeating in our hearts:

‘O Most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee! My God, my God, I love Thee in the most Blessed Sacrament!’

“After a few moments, Our Lady spoke again:

‘Pray the Rosary every day, in order to obtain peace for the world, and the end of the war.’

“Then she began to rise serenely, going up towards the east, until she disappeared in the immensity of space. The light that surrounded her seemed to open up a path before her in the firmament, and for this reason we sometimes said that we saw Heaven opening.”

Lucia went on to explain, “The Apparitions of Our Lady inspired neither fear nor fright, but rather surprise. When I was asked if I had experienced fear, and I said that we had, I was referring to the fear we felt when we saw the flashes of lightning and thought that a thunderstorm was at hand. It was from this that we wished to escape, as we were used to seeing lightning only when it thundered. Besides, the flashes of lightning were not really lightning, but the reflected rays of a light which was approaching. It was because we saw the light, that we sometimes said we saw Our Lady coming; but, properly speaking, we only perceived Our Lady in that light when she was already on the holmoak tree. The fact that we did not know how to explain this, and that we wished to avoid questions, caused us to say sometimes that we saw her coming, and other times that we did not. When we said we saw her coming, we were referring to the approach of the light, which after all was herself. And when we said we did not see her coming, we were referring to the fact that we really saw Our Lady only when she was on the holmoak.” [\[51\]](#)

Another interesting detail became known years later. When assisting Fr. Thomas McGlynn, O.P., who sculpted the first statue of Our Lady of Fatima, Lucia told him, “She always had a star on her tunic” and “She always had a cord with a little ball of light.” [\[52\]](#) As he asked for details of color, Lucia said, “The light of Our Lady was white, and the star was yellow...She was all of light. The light had various tones, yellow and white and various other colors. It was more intense and less intense. It was by the

different tones and by the differences of intensity that one saw what was hand and what was mantle and what was face and what was tunic.” [53]

Questioned again at a later point, she thrice confirmed to Fr. McGlynn that the star and the cord were yellow, *not* the color of gold. Lucia, incidentally, described both the cord and the star as a **more intense** and **yellow** light.

The yellow star that shone between the knee and hem of the Fatima Virgin’s tunic is known as the “Star of Esther,” a symbolic reference to the Old Testament history of Queen Esther, the Jewish queen of pagan Persia, who saved her people from total annihilation on the 13th day of Adar. Church Doctors like St. Albert the Great (called “the Great” due for his surpassing knowledge and wisdom in science, philosophy, and theology, he is also known in Latin as St. Albertus Magnus) and St. Alphonsus de Liguori (Italian Catholic bishop, spiritual writer, scholastic philosopher and theologian) recognized Queen Esther as a historical figure-type of the Virgin Mary.

The Fatima apparitions reveal so much more of this typology that my study on Queen Esther and the date of 13 Adar (according to the ancient Hebrew calendar) and their varied links to Our Lady of Fatima resulted in my 2008 series of articles, initially published in *Catholic Family News* and then, with the copyright notice attributing the rights to me, on my own blog. The first article in the series (“*Hidden Revelations: The Star of Esther and the Secrets of Fatima*”) gained the most attention. Unfortunately, it has also been copied in full or in part to various pages on the Internet, often with neither proper credit nor my permission. That said, after the 2008 series was published, “*Hidden Revelations*” eventually became a subject of Internet discussions and debates on various Catholic boards.

By 2013, however, “Hidden Revelations,” especially the sections on Esther’s original Hebrew name and its meaning, as well as the significance of the 13th day of Adar to Fatima, became increasingly recognized as valid input. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, because sections of the work (including its footnotes) were quoted *verbatim*, in sermons and articles both on and off the Internet, but again without any acknowledgement of the author. I ask the reader to kindly understand that, for the two following reasons, I only provide this brief mention of my study and my 2008 article(s) because: **1)** It is not difficult to foresee that there will be those who shall presume that I have utilized the work of another while neglecting the

courtesy of mentioning the source. Giving credit where it is due is one thing for which I always strive in my writing, as I trust that both the number of this book's footnotes (1,061 in total) and the manuscript's mention of specific sources will prove, and 2) most imperative, the typology of Queen Esther to the Virgin Mary of Fatima is so striking that the 2008 series, all of which is my original work, is later shared (and only slightly rearranged in order) as Parts 10-13 of this book.

June: The First Signs

Except for the children, there were no other people present in May. Lucia had no intention of mentioning to anyone the Apparition. She asked her cousins to also saying nothing, to which they both agreed. However, little Jacinta could not contain her enthusiasm and immediately told her mother, Olympia Marto. While Olympia was incredulous, her husband Ti Marto did not hesitate to muse that it could be possible that the Virgin appeared to the three children, as she had done at Lourdes and LaSalette. He knew his children never lied and that they had not enough knowledge to make up such a detailed story. However, Jacinta's revelation led to severe repercussions for her cousin Lucia, whose mother for some reason believed her forthright and youngest child was lying.

As word of the Vision spread, however, a great number assumed that the "Lady dressed all in white" was the Holy Mother of God. Starting in June 1917, each month brought an increasing number of both pilgrims and scoffers alike. Each month, only the three children could see the Lady. Each month, the ever-growing crowd (who did not see the Apparition of the Lady) was permitted to witness seemingly inexplicable, external signs which attested to the presence of a heavenly being.

When the Virgin returned on Wednesday, June 13, 1917, the three children were waiting for her. So were at least 50 other people who came to see for themselves what was really happening in Fatima. June 13 was the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua, a very popular day among the Catholics of Portugal. Lucia's mother had hoped that the village festival in honor of St. Anthony would halt Lucia from going to the Cova, while the parents of Francisco and Jacinta allowed the little ones to decide where they would go that day.

- It was at this June apparition that onlookers first saw a little cloud over the holmoak tree. Maria Carreira, one of those who saw the mysterious vapor only as the Apparition ended, said "we saw nothing but a slight cloud,

just a few inches away from the foliage, rising slowly toward the **east**.” At another time, she said that “it was a little cloud...which went up gently in the direction of the **east**, until it finally disappeared completely.” [54] It seems that Lucia and her cousins did not see this cloud resting on the holmoak tree because, in after years, Lucia would say, “The people spoke of a cloud but I saw none. Our Lady’s feet rested lightly on the top of the leaves.” [55]

- “During the vision,” stated another witness, “the branches of the tree were bent down all around” as if someone was stepping upon the branches. Yet another witness remarked that “when Lucia announced that Our Lady was leaving in the direction of the **east**, all the branches of the tree picked up and leaned in the same direction, as if Our Lady, as she left, had let her dress rest upon the boughs.” [56]

- When the cloud was no longer in sight, others also noticed that the little holmoak tree’s shoots, which had formerly been standing upright, were bent and inclined toward the **east**. [57]

- Moments earlier, during the Apparition, some of the fifty onlookers discerned an unintelligible murmur, “like the sound of a very faint voice, but we could not understand what it was saying; it was like the buzzing of a bee.” [58] Heard only between Lucia’s words to the invisible Lady, the mysterious sound appeared to be the Lady’s responses to the child.

What the Children Saw

As the witnesses saw or heard these first signs in June, what did the children experience? It soon became apparent that all three children could see the Lady, but Francisco could not hear her. Lucia, the eldest cousin, was the only one who spoke to the heavenly visitor. Once more, we rely on Lucia’s written testimony:

“As soon as Jacinta, Francisco and I had finished praying the Rosary, with a number of other people who were present, we saw once more the flash reflecting the light which was approaching (which we called lightning). The next moment, Our Lady was there on the holmoak, exactly the same as in May.”

However, in June, there was one slight difference which the child Lucia would not reveal until she was a nun and writing the memoirs. In the June 1917 apparition alone, the Lady showed the children her Immaculate Heart, encircled and pierced by thorns but displaying no swords through the Heart, as in usual artistic renditions of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of

Mary. When one considers this difference, it also makes sense, for the swords represent the Virgin's sorrows as the Mother of Christ, especially during His Passion and Crucifixion. The thorns, however, represent the sins of mankind. The children interiorly felt that they should not reveal this "secret," which they would in July learn is the true center of the Fatima message.

'What do you want of me?' I asked.

'I wish you to come here on the 13th of next month, to pray the Rosary every day, and to learn to read. Later, I will tell you what I want.'

I asked for the cure of a sick person.

'If he is converted, he will be cured during the year.'

'I would like to ask you to take us to Heaven.'

'Yes. I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon. But you are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. I promise salvation to those who embrace it, and those souls will be loved by God like flowers placed by me to adorn His throne.'

'Am I to stay here alone?' I asked, sadly.

'No, my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge, and the path that will lead you to God.'

"As Our Lady spoke these last words, she opened her hands and for the second time, she communicated to us the rays of that same immense light. We saw ourselves in this light, as it were, immersed in God. Jacinta and Francisco seemed to be in that part of the light which rose towards Heaven, and I in that which was poured out on the earth. In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand was a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it. We understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, and seeking reparation."

Of the light, Lucia would later reveal, "I think that, on that day, the main purpose of this light was to infuse within us a special knowledge and love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary...From that day onwards, our hearts were filled with a more ardent love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary." [59]

"You know now, Your Excellency, what we referred to when we said that Our Lady had **revealed a secret to us in June**. At the time, Our Lady did not tell us to keep it secret, but we felt moved to do so by God." The secret of June 1917 was the Immaculate Heart of Mary which, the children

immediately grasped, was “outraged by the sins of humanity, and seeking reparation.” This manifestation in June, the month in which the Church honors the Sacred Heart of Jesus, also shows that it is God’s will to make the Virgin Mary better known and loved, honoring her Heart beside the adoration of His own.

July: Six Signs Granted to the People

On July 13, the Lady promised the children, “In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle so that all may believe.” [60] Then the Virgin showed and told the children a secret—what is today known as the “Great Secret” of Fatima, which has three distinct parts called the First Secret, the Second Secret, and the Third Secret. For the growing crowd of people [61] who came to see the child visionaries, many (but not all) would also see and hear the unexpected.

1. Most of the witnesses who were closest to the spot where the Lady appeared heard a far-away, indescribable sound, perceived only in response to Lucia’s words. [62]

2. The atmosphere changed. As one witness stated, “The luminosity of the sky noticeably decreased, as during an eclipse, the whole time the ecstasy of the children lasted,” [63] and stars were seen in the midday sky.

3. At the height of a Portuguese summer, the very hot temperature suddenly dropped to a pleasant degree, accompanied by “a cool fresh breeze.” [64]

4. The color of the atmosphere became yellow as gold. [65]

5. During the Vision, a cloud again appeared and rested on the holmoak tree—but this time it gently spilled down and extended *around* the children. [66]

6. A “large clap of thunder” was heard just seconds before the eldest child, Lucia, suddenly jumped up from her kneeling position, exclaiming, “There she goes! There she goes!” as the Lady departed. The thunder shook the ground, so that a small arch placed by the apparition site “trembled as if in an earthquake.” [67]

In her memoirs to the bishop, Lucia described what she and her cousins witnessed during this central Fatima apparition, the one in which the children were given the “Great Secret” in its three distinct parts. One will note in the following memoirs the manner in which she records the Virgin’s words, especially the sentence which Fatima scholars agree introduces the Third Secret: “In Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved,

etc.”—the *et cetera* clearly denoting that there is more to follow.

“A few moments after arriving at the Cova da Iria, near the holmoak, where a large number of people were praying the Rosary, we saw the flash of light once more, and a moment later Our Lady appeared on the holmoak.

‘What do you want of me?’ I asked.

‘I want you to come here on the 13th of next month, to continue to pray the Rosary every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary, in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war, because only she can help you.’

‘I would like to ask you to tell us who you are, and to work a miracle so that everybody will believe that you are appearing to us.’

‘Continue to come here every month. In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe.’

“I then made some requests, but I cannot recall now just what they were. What I do remember is that Our Lady said it was necessary for such people to pray the Rosary in order to obtain these graces during the year. And she continued:

*‘Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say many times, especially whenever you make some sacrifice: **O my Jesus, it is for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**’*

“As Our Lady spoke these last words, she opened her hands once more, as she had done during the two previous months. The rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw as it were a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me). The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals.

“Terrified and as if to plead for succor, we looked up at Our Lady, who said to us, so kindly and so sadly:

‘You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. If

what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the reign of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.' [\[68\]](#)

'To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and an era of peace will be granted to the world.'

'In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved; etc...
Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him.'

(Again we are reminded that Francisco alone, who could see the Vision, could not hear the Virgin's words. The same phenomenon had occurred with the Angel's visits. Afterward, when the children were alone, Francisco would ask the two girls what the Angel or the Lady had told them.)

The Virgin's sentence about Portugal and the dogma of the Faith, as mentioned earlier, is considered by Fatima scholars as the opening text of the Third Secret. Reason alone conveys that the "et cetera" reveals that clarifying words follow, otherwise the prophecy about Portugal and the dogma of the Faith is incomplete. After all, it has been known for decades that the "Great Secret of Fatima", as also heretofore mentioned, is not three separate Secrets but one *whole* Secret, with three distinct parts.

The Third Secret also contains a **Vision**, which clearly relates to the missing text of Our Lady's words: "In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, etc." It was not until June 26, 2000, that the Vatican finally released the description of what some prelates (but never any Pope) claim is the whole Third Secret (but which many logically conclude is only *a part* of the entire Third Secret). The following English translation is how it appears on the Vatican website:

"After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left

hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: 'Penance, Penance, Penance!'

"And we saw in an immense light that is God: 'something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it,' a Bishop dressed in White 'we had the impression that it was the Holy Father.' Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God." [\[69\]](#)

After the Great Secret was revealed, Lucia related that the Virgin Mary then said:

*'When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery: **O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those with the greatest need of Thy mercy.***

"After this, there was a moment of silence, and then I asked: 'Is there anything more that you want of me?'

'No, I do not want anything more of you today.'

"Then, as before Our Lady began to ascend towards the east, until she finally disappeared in the immense distance of the firmament."

The children were immediately surrounded by people with questions: "What did the Lady say to you? Why did you go so white? Why did you cry out in fear? What happened?"

Lucia could only answer, "It's a secret."

The crowds continued to close in, so that Ti Marto (as the father of Francisco and Jacinta was called in the village) lifted little Jacinta, covered her face with his hat, and made his way through the throng. Two other men

carried Lucia and Francisco, holding the children high in their arms. As she was being carried above shoulder-level, the exhausted Lucia announced to the crowd that the Lady promised a Miracle for October 13. One can imagine the effect of the stunning announcement on a crowd that had already witnessed such amazing signs. Due to those present at the July 1917 apparition, word of the promised Miracle quickly spread throughout Portugal.

August: The Lady's Invisible Presence and a Boom of Thunder

In the morning of August 13, the children were abducted by the Masonic mayor of their locality. They were, therefore, unable to meet the Lady at the appointed place and time. Certainly, Heaven knew that the children were not present at the Cova di Iria, where the Apparition appeared. But God deigned to grant certain signs to the throng of people, thus manifesting the Lady's unseen presence.

The sun shone brightly in the clear August sky, and those who came to Fatima eagerly awaited the arrival of the children and the noon hour. Then word came and spread throughout the crowd that the mayor had kidnapped the young visionaries. As the people began to talk among themselves, the hour of solar noon commenced—as did certain signs previously seen and heard in July:

- First came an extremely loud boom of thunder, which so badly frightened the people that many scattered and ran, thinking they would be killed. Maria Carreira, eyewitness to every Fatima apparition since June 1917, said, “Some thought the thunder came from the road; others thought it came from the holmoak; but it seemed to me that it came from a distance. It frightened us all...” [\[70\]](#)

- A flash of lightning, following the thunder, also garnered the attention of the now-silenced crowd. This “flash,” seen only by the three children, served as the sign of the Virgin's approach. [\[71\]](#) In August, when the children were not present, it was the crowd who perceived it. [\[72\]](#)

- Immediately after the “flash,” a little cloud, described as very delicate and very white, appeared and hovered over the little holmoak tree for a few minutes, “and then rose in the air and disappeared.” [\[73\]](#)

- Simultaneously, there was a change of atmosphere, in which people saw “all the colors of the rainbow, pink, red, blue....The trees seemed to be made not of leaves but of flowers...The ground came out in colors and so

did our clothes. The lanterns fixed to the arch looked like gold.” [74] (At the initiative of Signora Maria Carreira, the villager who since June 1917 came to the Cova on the 13th of the month, a humble wooden arch, to which was added on each side a plain lantern, was erected over the holmoak tree.)

“When the signs disappeared, the people seemed to realize that Our Lady had come and, not finding the children, had returned,” as Maria Carreira would later say. “They felt that Our Lady was disappointed and hence they were exceedingly upset.” [75]

Among themselves, the awed people agreed that the Lady had indeed come—with many incensed “against those who had the audacity to deprive the Most Holy Virgin of her usual confidants.” [76] In fact, history records that a group of pilgrims went in search of the perpetrator or suspected accomplices, demanding the children’s return. [77]

Meanwhile, over the course of three days (August 13-15, 1917), the young ones endured a roller-coaster of interrogation, enticing promises, a malicious charade of facing death should they refuse to deny seeing the Lady from Heaven, and finally, imprisonment with adult malefactors. Through it all, the three children remained faithful to what they had earlier reported, but they refused to divulge anything pertaining to the Secret.

The little ones were released to their parents on August 15, the very day on which the Church celebrates the Assumption of Mary, body and soul, into Heaven. (In 1917, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was a Church doctrine. It was not solemnly defined as a dogma until 1950.) Our Lady unexpectedly appeared to the children on Sunday, August 19. She again promised a miracle in the last month “so that all may believe.” She also told the children, “If you had not been taken away to the City, the miracle would have been greater,” [78] thus emphasizing God’s revealed truth that all people are affected by every sin that wounds the Mystical Body of Christ.

Again, Lucia recorded what happened on that day:

“I was accompanied by Francisco and his brother John. We were with the sheep in a place called Valinhos, when we felt something supernatural approaching and enveloping us. Suspecting that Our Lady was about to appear to us, and feeling sorry lest Jacinta might miss seeing her, we asked her brother to go and call her. As he was unwilling to go, I offered him two small coins, and off he ran.”

“Meanwhile, Francisco and I saw the flash of light, which we called lightning. Jacinta arrived, and a moment later, we saw Our Lady on a

holmoak tree.”

‘What do you want of me?’

‘I want you to continue going to the Cova da Iria on the 13th, and to continue praying the Rosary every day. In the last month, I will perform a miracle so that all may believe.’ (Note that this is the **second time** the Virgin promised an October miracle.)

‘What do you want done with the money that the people leave in the Cova da Iria?’

‘Have two litters made. One is to be carried by you and Jacinta and two other girls dressed in white; the other one is to be carried by Francisco and three other boys. The money from the litters is for the ‘festa’ of Our Lady of the Rosary, and what is left over will help towards the construction of a chapel that is to be built here.’

‘I would like to ask you to cure some sick persons.’

‘Yes, I will cure some of them during the year.’

Then, looking very sad, Our Lady said: ‘Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.’

“And she began to ascend as usual towards the east.”

September: A Luminous Globe, a Pillar of Cloud, and a Shower of Flowers

On the liturgical calendar, September is the month in which the Church honors Our Lady’s Nativity (Sept. 8), the Holy Name of Mary (Sept. 12), her Seven Sorrows (Sept. 15), and Our Lady of Ransom (Sept. 24).

At Fatima in 1917, September was the month *before* the promised miracle. It was also the month *after* the children were kidnapped, when—as far as the public knew—they missed their August visit with the Lady. Rather than discouraging pilgrims from the site, even more came.

Perhaps it is for all of the reasons stated above that, during the apparition of Thursday, September 13, the celestial phenomena became more pronounced. In fact, during the September Apparition, the people saw a new sign—a luminescent globe. Later, the cloud accompanying the Vision wrought itself into an incense-like pillar.

On this day, the sky was deep and blue, and entirely without a trace of cloud, as was reported by Fr. John Quaresma who, in later years, became the Vicar General of Leiria, Portugal. With two other priests, Fr. Quaresma came to Fatima, trying to ascertain the truth of the reports they had heard.

He and his companions disguised themselves by wearing suit-coats. “All three were at a distance from the crowd, on the raised part of the Cova, observing events.” [\[79\]](#)

Years later, a letter of Fr. Quaresma’s, written in 1932 to another priest, provides the most details of what happened during the September Apparition. From Father’s letter, we learn the following:

- For the first time, many of the onlookers saw a luminous globe, moving from east to west at midday, the exact time that the Lady always asked the children to meet her. From what is gathered by his testimony, Fr. Quaresma only saw this globe of “extraordinary light” for a brief time. Others saw it travel across the sky and descend toward the holmoak tree. As the Vision ended, witnesses again saw the globe of light, departing toward the east.

- As the globe approached the small tree, the brightness of the sun lessened, the surrounding atmosphere became a golden-yellow, and some people reported seeing stars in the sky.

- During the Apparition, a greater number of the onlookers observed a shower of small white objects—described either as petals, snowflakes, dove-shaped forms, stars, or roses—all of which gently fell from the sky and disappeared before touching the ground. [\[80\]](#)

- A “pleasant looking cloud formed around the rustic arch” over the holmoak tree, where Our Lady appeared. “Rising up from the ground, it grew thicker and went up into the air until it was five or six meters high; then it disappeared like smoke that vanishes before the wind...A few moments later, similar curls of smoke were formed and disappeared in the same manner, and then a third time. Everything happened as though some invisible thurifers were incensing the Vision liturgically. These three ‘incensations’ together lasted the whole time of the apparition; that is, from ten to fifteen minutes.” [\[81\]](#)

Once more, Lucia testifies to what happened on this September day, where the throngs of people were larger than ever before:

“As the hour approached, I set out with Jacinta and Francisco, but owing to the crowds around us we could only advance with difficulty. The roads were packed with people, and everyone wanted to see us and speak to us. There was no human respect whatsoever. Simple folk, and even ladies and gentlemen, struggled to break through the crowd that pressed around us. No sooner had they reached us than they threw themselves on their knees

before us, begging us to place their petitions before Our Lady. Others who could not get close to us shouted from a distance:

‘For the love of God, ask Our Lady to cure my son who is a cripple!’ Yet another cried out: ‘And to cure mine who is blind!...To cure mine who is deaf!...To bring back my husband, my son, who has gone to the war!... To convert a sinner!...To give me back my health as I have tuberculosis!’ and so on.

“All the afflictions of poor humanity were assembled there. Some climbed up to the tops of trees and walls to see us go by, and shouted down to us. Saying yes to some, giving a hand to others and helping them up from the dusty ground, we managed to move forward, thanks to some gentlemen who went ahead and opened a passage for us through the multitude.

“Now, when I read in the New Testament about those enchanting scenes of Our Lord's passing through Palestine, I think of those which Our Lord allowed me to witness, while yet a child, on the poor roads and lanes from Aljustrel to Fatima and on to the Cova da Iria! I give thanks to God, offering Him the faith of our good Portuguese people, and I think: ‘If these people so humbled themselves before three poor children, just because they were mercifully granted the grace to speak to the Mother of God, what would they not do if they saw Our Lord Himself in person before them?’

“Well, none of this was called for here! It was a distraction of my pen, leading me away where I did not mean to go. But, never mind! It's just another useless digression. I am not tearing it out, so as not to spoil the notebook.

“At last, we arrived at the Cova da Iria, and on reaching the holmoak we began to say the Rosary with the people. Shortly afterwards, we saw the flash of light, and then Our Lady appeared on the holmoak.

‘Continue to pray the Rosary in order to obtain the end of the war. In October Our Lord will come, as well as Our Lady of Dolours and Our Lady of Carmel. Saint Joseph will appear with the Child Jesus to bless the world. God is pleased with your sacrifices. He does not want you to sleep with the rope on, but only to wear it during the daytime.’ (**Author's Note:** The children had been making many sacrifices, including constantly wearing under their clothing a rough bit of rope they discovered while playing. They cut the rope in thirds, each taking a part to wrap around their waists. The rope hurt and chafed terribly but, like the other penances they were offering, the three young ones kept this sacrifice for the conversion of sinners a secret

among themselves.)

‘I was told to ask you many things, the cure of some sick people, of a deaf-mute...’

‘Yes, I will cure some, but not others because God has no confidence in them. In October, I will perform a miracle so that all may believe.’ (Note that this is the Virgin’s **third** affirmation of an October miracle.)

“Then Our Lady began to rise as usual, and disappeared.”

Seeking the Meaning of the Signs

Of all the signs given to the people since June 13, the delicate cloud is a constant. Those who saw it confirmed that it rested on the holmoak tree during the Apparitions, always coming forth from, and returning to, the east. In July, it reached out to surround the children, who would see and hear the “Great Secret” of Fatima. In August, despite the children’s absence, the beautiful cloud still manifested itself.

And then, in September, when the sky was blue and clear, the preternatural mist once more appeared at the very site of the Apparition, thickly rising from the ground to an impressive height. Three times in September, this remarkable cloud exhibited the characteristics of blessed, burning incense which, in the Church, is used during solemn liturgies and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. At the last Apparition of October, 1917—the month of the prodigious Miracle of the Sun—it would do so again.

What is the meaning of the extraordinary cloud? Why did it always come forth from the east and depart hence? Why did thunder sometimes announce the Lady’s approach or departure? Why were stars seen at noontime? What of the sudden atmospheric changes or mysterious flowers seen on trees, at the very height of a hot summer? Can we discover the significance of the other signs? To find the answers, we must look to the two sources of Divine Revelation—Tradition and Scripture.

PART 3

The Cloud, Sign of the Holy Trinity

“You, O Mary...are a living Tabernacle, a Monstrance, a living Temple, the permanent abode of the Most Holy Trinity, Mother of God and Our Mother...”

**–Sr. Maria Lucia
of the Immaculate Heart,
eldest of the Fatima visionaries**

Throughout salvation history, the signs of God indicate various purposes. A true sign can possess any one or more of the following seven functions: It confirms God’s word, His goodness, authenticates prophecy, verifies God’s blessings and His intervention for the sake of the elect, strengthens the faithful with hope, insures or testifies God’s Presence, or declares His judgment upon sin. [82] Not only do the 1917 apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Fatima fulfill all seven functions of Scriptural signs, they also serve as a “Mariophany.”

To understand what is meant by “Mariophany,” we must look to the definition of “Theophany,” which comes from the ancient Greek (ἡ) Θεοφάνεια - *Theophaneia* and means “appearance of God.” The *Concise Catholic Dictionary* defines “theophany” as follows: “[1] Appearances or visions of God to man or the direct communication of God with man. [2] The apparitions of God to man, usually as recorded in Genesis where God appeared visibly to man as Lawgiver, Judge, and Prophet. They taught that there was only one God and that God Himself was speaking to man.” [83] In both Christian and Jewish usage, the word refers to “the manifestation of God to man; the *sensible sign* (i.e., one or more of the five senses, such as sight, scent, hearing, taste, or touch) by which the Presence of God is revealed.” [84]

In brief, “Mariophany” may be defined as “appearances of Mary” to man. Like the word “theophany,” however, there are rich, deeper meanings to this one term. “Mariophany” refers to the apparitions of Mary when she, already assumed body and soul into Heaven, appears visibly to a person (or persons) to remind all of mankind to turn to God, Who is Lawgiver, Judge, and Prophet. “Mariophany” can also mean the manifestation of Mary in

which God emphasizes her office throughout all of salvation history, from *Genesis* to the *Apocalypse*. Finally, “Mariophany” signifies God’s Triune Presence in the Immaculate Virgin, through whom He reveals Himself via “sensible signs.”

Examining the Sensible Signs at Fatima

As previously noted in the first part of this work, witness testimonies reveal the following “sensible signs” seen at Fatima over the course of five months:

- A delicate white cloud, traveling from east to west, serenely settling over a young holmoak tree. The same cloud, after resting on the tree during the entire time of the Apparition, rose and departed from whence it came –toward the east.

- In July (the month in which the Virgin gave the children a Great Secret), the cloud (mentioned above), three times curling and rising into the air during the whole time of the Apparition—as though invisible thurifers were liturgically incensing the Vision.

- Claps of thunder, either as the Lady arrived or as she departed.
- Flashes of light, as the Vision approached the small holmoak tree.
- The ground of the apparition site momentarily trembling, like the briefest of earthquakes.

- The branches and shoots of the young holmoak tree mysteriously bending to the east after the Apparition departed.

- Atmospheric changes of the sky’s luminosity, similar to a solar eclipse, or changes of unusual color, from yellow gold to all the colors of the rainbow. Some people reported seeing stars in the sky at solar noon.

- A relieving drop in temperature, during the hottest days of summer, accompanied by a cool fresh breeze.

- Small, white objects described as stars, roses, or doves gently falling from the sky, only to disappear before touching the ground.

- A globe of extraordinary light that glided, from east to west, descending toward the small holmoak tree.

“Of all the signs witnessed by the people since June 13, the delicate cloud is a constant,” as Part I of this book also observed. “...In July, it reached out to surround the children, who would see and hear the ‘Great Secret’ of Fatima. In August, despite the children’s absence, the beautiful cloud still manifested itself.”

“And then, in September, when the sky was blue and clear, the

preternatural mist once more appeared at the very site of the Apparition, extending itself over the holmoak tree, down to the ground, only to rise up to an impressive height. Three times in September, this remarkable cloud exhibited the characteristics of blessed, burning incense. At the last Apparition of October, 1917—the month of the prodigious Miracle of the Sun—it would do so again.”[85]

The Cloud in Holy Scripture

What is the meaning of this cloud, this one recurring sign, seen by the people during every Apparition of the Lady? Since only the three young shepherd children could see a beautiful Lady dressed all in white, the people of humble and simple faith immediately concluded that the cloud revealed the presence of the Virgin Mary. Like the Scriptural theophanies wherein the Lord our God revealed His Presence in the form of a cloud or a pillar of cloud, one can say that the beautiful mist at Fatima also manifested the presence of the Holy Trinity within the Virgin Mary, who is God’s living, perpetual Tabernacle.

Frère Michel of the Holy Trinity, a most astute Fatima historian and apologist, was careful to point out this biblical theophany which occurred in 1917. In discerning the meaning of the cloud, he wrote that “from the giving of the law to Moses on Sinai to the Transfiguration of Jesus on Tabor, the cloud always appears in sacred history as the symbol and sensible expression of the divine Presence.” Let us look, then, to some of the Scriptures which record the Lord God manifesting His Presence in the form of a cloud or a pillar of cloud:

- “Behold, the Lord is riding on a swift **cloud** and comes to Egypt; and the idols of Egypt will tremble in his presence.” (*Isaiah 19:1*) St. Jerome, St. Proclus and many early writers considered the “swift cloud” to be an opaque reference to the Virgin Mary. Since the Hebrew word “qual” means either swift or light (as in weight, not brightness), St. Jerome noted that “surely we ought to see in the light cloud holy Mary, who was not weighed down by any manly seed.” [86]

- “And the Lord went before them to shew the way by day in **a pillar of a cloud**, and by night in a pillar of fire: that he might be the guide of their journey at both times.” (*Exodus 13:21*)

- “And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removing, went behind them: and together with him the **pillar of the cloud**, leaving the forepart...” (*Exodus 14:19*)

- “And now the morning watch was come, and behold the Lord looking upon the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and of **the cloud**, slew their host.” (*Exodus 14:24*)

- “And when Aaron spoke to all the assembly of the children of Israel, they looked towards the wilderness: and behold the glory of the Lord appeared **in a cloud**.” (*Exodus 16:10*)

- “And the glory of the Lord dwelt upon Sinai, covering it with *a cloud* six days: and the seventh day he called him out of the midst of the cloud.” (*Exodus 24:16*)

- “And when he was gone into the tabernacle of the covenant, the **pillar of the cloud** came down, and stood at the door, and he spoke with Moses.” (*Exodus 33:9*)

- “And all saw that the **pillar of the cloud** stood at the door of the tabernacle. And they stood, and worshipped at the doors of their tents.” (*Exodus 33:10*)

- “The Lord came down in a **pillar of the cloud**, and stood in the entry of the tabernacle...” (*Numbers 12:5*)

- “And the inhabitants of this land, who have heard that thou, O Lord, art among this people, and art seen face to face, and thy cloud protecteth them, and thou goest before them in a **pillar of a cloud** by day, and in a pillar of fire by night.” (*Numbers 14:4*)

- “...and the Lord appeared there in the **pillar of a cloud**, which stood in the entry of *the tabernacle*.” (*Deuteronomy 31:15*)

- “And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the sanctuary, that **a cloud** filled the house of the Lord.” (*3 Kings: 8:10*)

- “And at the seventh time, behold, **a little cloud** arose out of the sea like a man's foot. And he said: Go up and say to Achab: Prepare thy chariot and go down, lest the rain prevent thee.” (*3 Kings 18:44*)

- “So when they all sounded together, both with trumpets, and voice, and cymbals, and organs, and with divers kind of musical instruments, and lifted up their voice on high: the sound was heard afar off, so that when they began to praise the Lord, and to say: Give glory to the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever: the house of God was filled **with a cloud**.” (*2 Paralipomenon 5:13*)

- “And in a **pillar of a cloud** thou wast their leader by day, and in a pillar of fire by night, that they might see the way by which they went.” (*2 Esdras 9:12*)

- “Yet thou, in thy many mercies, didst not leave them in the desert: **the pillar of the cloud** departed not from them by day to lead them in *the way*, and the pillar of fire by night to shew them the way by which they should go.” (2 Esdras 9:19)

- “He spoke to them in the **pillar of the cloud**. They kept his testimonies, and the commandment which he gave them.” (Psalms 98:7)

- “I dwelt in the highest places, and my throne is in a **pillar of a cloud**.” (Ecclesiasticus 24:7)

- “Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a **pillar of smoke** of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?” (Canticles 3:6)

Of this mysterious column of cloud, St. Ambrose wrote: “That pillar of cloud did, in its outward appearance, go before the children of Israel, but as a mystery it signified the Lord Jesus, who was to come in a light cloud, as Isaiah said; that in the Virgin Mary, who was a cloud on account of the inheritance of Eve, but light because of her virginal integrity.” [87]

Elsewhere, St. Ambrose again compared the Virgin to a cloud: “Oh, the riches of Mary’s virginity...As a cloud, she waters the earth with the rain of Christ’s grace...Receive, then, receive, O consecrated virgins, the spiritual rain that falls from this cloud...Run after this good cloud, for within her she has brought forth a fountain to water the face of the earth.” [88]

Centuries before the Fatima apparitions, St. Alphonsus de Liguori wrote of the Old Testament’s pillar of cloud and pillar of smoke: “This stupendous pillar, at times as a cloud, at others as fire, says Richard of St. Laurence, was a figure of Mary fulfilling the double office she constantly exercises for our good. As a cloud, she constantly protects us from the ardour of Divine Justice; and as fire, she protects us from devils.” In regard to the passage from Canticles 3:6 (quoted above), St. Alphonsus also said: “We gather from the sacred canticles, that on the Assumption of Our Lady, the angels asked her name three times. *Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke?* Again, *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?* and again *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights?*” [89]

Considering that the biblical theophanies reveal the manifestation of the Holy Trinity in a cloud or a pillar of cloud, we must likewise consider the remarkable cloud of Fatima, which consistently appeared during the apparitions of the beautiful Lady of Fatima who, on October 13, 1917,

identified herself with these words: “I am the Lady of the Rosary.” Frère Michel muses, “But how can we explain the fact that a creature—even the most sublime—could manifest herself in the glorious aura of a specifically divine attribute?” [\[90\]](#)

The answer, he notes, is also found in the Scriptures. Specifically, he writes that it is “rich in mystical significance and is taught in the *Gospel of Luke*, by way of allusion but still quite clearly: through a series of hints that the exegetes have perfectly grasped, the Evangelist identifies the Virgin Mary with the Ark of the Covenant.” [\[91\]](#)

“This Ark,” he continues, “was like a moveable sanctuary, the place where Yahweh had fixed His residence, accompanying Israel in its wanderings; and the Cloud manifested His presence. As soon as the Ark was introduced, we read in the book of Exodus, ‘the cloud covered the tent of the meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.’ [Exod.40:34-35] After the building of the Temple by Solomon, the Ark was solemnly carried in by the priests to the Holy of Holies. And finally, it is by the Cloud that Yahweh manifests that He is taking possession of His Temple, and establishes His abode there.” [\[92\]](#)

“Mary is the sanctuary and the repose of the Holy Trinity,” said St. Louis de Montfort, echoing the Church. [\[93\]](#) He also said, “Mary is a holy place, and the holy of holies where Saints are formed and moulded.” [\[94\]](#) On September 13 and October 13, 1917, the Fatima Cloud rose three times like incense, just as incense is liturgically offered three times before the Blessed Sacrament at a High Mass or Benediction. Frère Michel observed that these three signs not only remind us of the “triple incensation in the liturgy, [but] the Immaculate Virgin shows us that she is the Abode and the Temple of God, the Sanctuary of the Holy Trinity, and the Ark of the New Covenant.” [\[95\]](#)

PART 4

Signs from the East

“Look about thee, O Jerusalem, towards the east, and behold the joy that cometh to thee from God.”

–*Baruch 4:36*

In continuing this concise study of the external signs seen by the crowds during the 1917 apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima, I ask the reader to keep in mind that the many “public” portents hold a “highly symbolic and mystical significance.” [96] The second chapter of this work described the seven functions of a true sign from God, [97] noting that the signs at Fatima fulfill all of those seven purposes. It also observed that the signs of Fatima serve as a “Mariophany,” [98] and briefly illustrated how, through the sensible sign of a cloud, Our Lady of Fatima showed herself to be “the abode and Temple of God, the Sanctuary of the Holy Trinity, and the Ark of the Covenant.” [99]

The graceful cloud, signifying Our Lady’s presence, was seen arriving or departing to the east. In the last two months of the Fatima apparitions (September and October 1917), many in the crowd also noticed **a luminous globe**. This globe appeared in the sky, moving from east to west at midday, at the exact time that the Lady asked the three children to meet her.

Among the people, some saw the globe descend toward the holmoak tree, only to disappear while the Vision lasted. As the globe approached the little tree, the brightness of the sun lessened, the surrounding atmosphere turned a golden-yellow, and stars were seen in the sky at solar noon—a scientifically impossible occurrence if a solar eclipse is not underway. When the Lady’s visit to the children ended, many witnessed that the globe or “orb” of light reappeared and serenely ascended into the sky, toward the east. Here, it is essential to emphasize that the globe (like the cloud), always came from, and departed to, the *east*.

The Luminous Orb

First, we shall consider the beautiful globe of light. Some immediately thought it a means of transport for the Virgin Mary, who is risen from the dead and assumed, body and soul, into Heaven. In other words, the globe draws attention to the Assumption of the Blessed Mother.

As Fr. H. O’Laverty wrote in his book, *The Mother of God and Her Glorious Feasts*, “...it should not be forgotten that...in the things of God, where there is but the true and the good, simplicity alone will reveal the greatest heights and the most secret depths.” [\[100\]](#) In 1917, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was a Church doctrine which would be solemnly **defined** as a dogma in 1950. Like the parables of Our Lord, and like the answers He gave to those who questioned Him, we must delve a little deeper to better understand the manifestation of this globe.

When reflecting on the Fatima sign of a luminous globe, one comes to the realization that at no other Church-approved Marian apparition did Our Lady exhibit any display of being “carried” from Heaven to earth. For example, in the 1830 apparitions of the Rue de Bac to St. Catherine Labouré, the Virgin suddenly appeared in the chapel; the saint could even hear the rustling of the Lady’s gown. With one exception, there were no bystanders to attest to any outer signs, and so it must follow that none were given. In the one case in which the saint, at prayer with other sisters, saw the Virgin in the chapel, not one other person was aware that a heavenly vision was taking place. LaSalette was a one-time apparition; there were no witnesses except the visionaries.

The 1858 apparitions at Lourdes, France, were different because Lourdes is the first of modern apparition sites which drew onlookers. St. Bernadette Soubirous stated that “the Lady” who came to her simply appeared in the Grotto niche—but when pressed for details, she said that a “golden cloud” within the niche quickly preceded the Lady’s appearance. The people who came to Lourdes during St. Bernadette’s apparitions would testify to the saint’s demeanor during her ecstasies, but none reported any sensible signs attesting to the Vision’s presence.

In other words, neither at Lourdes nor at later sites, like Pontmain and Pellevoisin, were there any “public” manifestations of the Virgin traveling to or from the apparition site—no cloud, no orb, not even the tiniest glimmer of celestial light witnessed by spectators. Neither were there other signs like those at Fatima: a flash of lightning, brief claps of thunder, trembling of the ground, a gentle rain of small white objects described as petals, doves or stars, or any atmospheric changes of color, light, or temperature. (The one-time apparition of Pontmain does have one exception, which were three stars in a triangular formation that onlookers saw only on the one night in which the Virgin appeared. The three stars were never seen again. And, of

course, this observation does not include Our Lady of Knock, which was a singular appearance, witnessed by anyone who came to the site.)

In addition to the dogma of the Virgin's Assumption, it seems the Fatima globe simultaneously reminds us of the Virgin's magnificent office in the whole of salvation history. For example, St. Bernard addressed the Lady Mary as "the heavenly chariot," [101] while St. John Geometra saluted her by saying "Hail, resplendent car!"—signifying that "she is the car in which her clients mount to heaven." St. Athanasius said, "And thou, O Lady, wast filled with grace, that thou mightest be the way of our salvation, and the means of ascent to the heavenly kingdom." [102] The orb of light attests to her own words at Fatima, when she said, "I am *of* Heaven," and not "I am *from* Heaven."

As Fr. O'Laverty wrote, "God wishes to make use of Mary for the salvation of souls." [103] The mysterious, beautiful globe confirms that the Virgin is assumed body and soul into Heaven, and it simultaneously confirms the doctrine that Our Lady is the Mediatrix between mankind and the Lord Jesus. She, herself, is "the heavenly chariot" that leads souls to Heaven when they cooperate with God's designs.

The Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, and the East

Second, we shall consider why both the cloud and the globe of light traveled *from the east* and *returned to the east*. To do that, we shall once more briefly look to the Scriptures, keeping in mind that the following quotations and accompanying, short commentaries merely scratch the surface of all that the Bible reveals to us about God, His Presence, foreshadowing, prophecies, and the many figure-types of Our Lord or Our Lady:

- "Before the tabernacle of the covenant, that is to say on the **east** side, shall Moses and Aaron camp, with their sons, having the custody of the sanctuary, in the midst of the children of Israel." (*Numbers 3:38*)

In the Old Testament, God's instructed Moses *that the Tabernacle in the wilderness must always face east*, toward the Mount of Olives, where Christ's Passion would one day begin. A figure-type for the Virgin Mary, the Old Testament Tabernacle is also a figure of the eternal Church, which Christ founded upon Peter, the Rock.

- "Who hath raised up the just one from the **east**, hath called him to follow him? he shall give the nations in his sight, and he shall rule over

kings: he shall give them as the dust to his sword, as stubble driven by the wind, to his bow.” (*Isaiah 41:2*)

The Just One is Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The star of His Nativity, the Star of Bethlehem, rose in the east. [\[104\]](#) Consider, too, that the miraculous Star was a great sign seen in the sky, as foretold in the *Old Testament* (“a star shall rise out of Jacob”—*Numbers 24:7*). Here it should be noted that, with the exception of three wise men who undertook a perilous journey to follow the star, nobody else paid the sign any attention. In a similar manner, the signs and the requests given at Fatima, coupled with the continual modern-day signs of warning given to the entire world, are for the most part ignored.

- “Arise, O Jerusalem, and stand on high: and look about towards the **east**, and behold thy children gathered together from the rising to the setting sun, by the word of the Holy One rejoicing in the remembrance of God.” (*Baruch 5:5*)

Jerusalem is, of course, an ancient historical city but, like other biblical places or people or events, it also serves as a figure-type. Since the Scripture passage above cannot be interpreted literally (because the city of Jerusalem cannot arise, or stand high, or look), it is a figure-type (or rather, a personification) for both the Church and the Virgin Mary (whom the Church founded by Christ also calls the heavenly Jerusalem).

- “And the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the **east** gate of the house of the Lord, which looketh towards the rising of the sun.” (*Ezechiel 11:1*)

Thus opens the *Prophecy of Ezechiel*, which the *Douay-Rheims Bible* prefaces in this manner: “A prophecy against the presumptuous assurance of the great ones. A remnant shall be saved, and receive a new spirit, and a new heart.”

Such a preface soundly reminds us of our own times. Does it not make us think of the “great ones” who refuse to heed the entire message of Fatima? Should not the virtue of perseverance bid us to pray and work for the complete release of the Third Secret of Fatima and for the conversion of sinners? At the same time, does it make us deeply grateful that even now, as in the days of Ezechiel, a remnant shall be saved?

- “And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood over the mount that is on the **east** side of the city.” (*Ezechiel 11:23*)

This phrase, “glory of the Lord” or the “glory of God” refers to a

sensible sign of God's Presence—the "Shekinah." The word "Shekinah" literally means the *dwelling* or *settling* of God, whether in a person or an object (like the Ark of the Covenant or Solomon's Temple). Furthermore, among the Hebrews, *Shekinah* was interchangeable with the word *God*.

In the Old Testament, the "Shekinah" was seen to ascend (it "went up from the midst of the city") and "stood over the mount...on the **east** side of the city." In a similar manner, both the luminous globe and the cloud seen at Fatima ascended to the east.

- "And he brought me to the gate that looked toward the **east**. And behold the glory of the God of Israel came in by way of the **east**...And the majesty of the Lord went into the temple by the way of the gate that looked to the **east**." (*Ezekiel* 43:1-2, 4)

Again, the Scriptures record God's preference for the symbolism of the east, for the "glory of God" (Shekinah) came in by way of the **east**. Recalling that the word "glory" refers to a sensible sign of God's Presence in a person or object, and that "Jerusalem" is also a symbol for either the Virgin of the Church, and that since Christ's death and Resurrection, the House of Israel are the faithful in the Church, this passage moreover calls to mind the ancient Israelite's exultant praise for Judith (a historical figure-type of Our Lady), which the entire Church ecstatically proclaims of Mary, the Mother of God, "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of our people." [\[105\]](#)

Tradition also teaches that the **Eastern Gate** of the ancient Temple of Israel is a figure-type of Our Lady, who as the Immaculate Conception is the "glory of God." As St. Louis de Montfort wrote, "The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the Fathers, also styles the Blessed Virgin *the Eastern Gate*, by which the High Priest, Jesus Christ, enters the world and leaves it (*Ezech.* 44:2-3). By it He came the first time, and by it He will (leave) the second (time). The sanctuary of the Divinity, the repose of the Most Holy Trinity, the throne of God, the city of God, the altar of God, the temple of God, the world of God—all these different epithets and encomiums are most substantially true with references which the Most High has wrought in Mary." [\[106\]](#)

- "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Behold I will save my people from the land of the **east**, and from **the land of the going down of the sun**." (*Zachariah* 8:7)

Zachariah's prophecy is one fulfilled in Christ, the promised Messiah,

and His Church. However, since Scriptural prophecy often possesses a dual meaning, and since many Old Testament prophecies are intended for future days, it may likewise refer to the last days. This prophecy appears to be speaking of at least two nations from which God will literally save his people.

- “For as lightning cometh out of the **east**, and appeareth even into the west: so shall the coming of the Son of man be.” (*Matthew 24:7*)

In the quote above, Our Lord foretells His Second Coming and the Last Judgment; the entire passage prophecies the signs that shall precede the literal last days of the world. Jesus will return from the direction of the **east**, for it has long been held that, when He ascended into Heaven, He ascended toward the **east**. As St. John Damascene wrote, “At His ascent into Heaven, He went to the East, and so do the Apostles pray to Him; He will come again as the Apostles saw Him going, and so the Lord says Himself: *For as lightning cometh out of the east...*” [\[107\]](#)

The East, then, is always symbolic of Christ. It is the reason why God willed the Old Testament Tabernacle to face the east, why the Star of Bethlehem rose in the east, why Catholic altars traditionally face the east, and why, in this modern age, Our Lady of Fatima, who is hailed in the Litany of Loreto as “Gate of Heaven,” arrived and departed to the east. May we remember, too, that “Russia, which is in easternmost Europe, will be the font of conversion once it is actually consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” [\[108\]](#)

PART 5

Stars at High Noon: Our Lord, Our Lady, & the Church

“The sun, and the moon, and the *stars* being bright, and sent forth for profitable uses, are obedient.”

–*Baruch 6:59*

Stars appearing on a clear day at solar noon. Atmospheric changes of the sky’s luminosity, similar to a solar eclipse, with hues from yellow gold to all the colors of the rainbow. A sudden and relieving drop in temperature, during the hottest days of summer, accompanied by a cool fresh breeze. Flashes of lightning and claps of thunder that made the ground tremble. These and other portents, witnessed by many onlookers to the 1917 Fatima apparitions, possess a “highly symbolic and mystical significance.” [\[109\]](#) In particular, the Virgin Mary’s visit of September 13, “in which there were more signs than ever, and the largest crowd was present, imposes itself quite especially on our attention.” [\[110\]](#)

As already noted, in September, a new sign—a luminous globe—was seen, gliding from east to west. It descended to the holmoak tree, over which the Lady always appeared to the three children. The time was high noon and, according to a letter written by witness Fr. John Quaresma, who later became the Vicar General of Leiria, Portugal, there was not “a cloud in the deep blue sky.” [\[111\]](#) Then, writes Fatima historian Frère Michel of the Holy Trinity, “the sun’s brightness diminished, the atmosphere became golden yellow, like the other times. *Some people even reported being able to distinguish the stars in the sky.*” [\[112\]](#)

Stars in the Scriptures

According to Fr. Bernard Kramer, “In the Septuagint, [\[113\]](#) the word [sign] is used for celestial phenomena.” [\[114\]](#) With the exception of the sun, which is the “day star” [\[115\]](#) of the Scriptures, the symbol of Jesus who is the Son of Justice (but also representative of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, per St. John Eudes), rare is the sight of a star during the daylight hours. Writing on the invisible power behind the sign of the Star of Bethlehem, which shone in the day, St. John Chrysostom observed, “... one may see this from the time also. For it [a star] appears not in the night, but in mid-day,

while the sun is shining; and *this is not within the power of a star.*" [\[116\]](#)
Such a manifestation is, however, within the omnipotent power of God,
Who uses the lights of heaven when He wishes to give His people a *sign*.

The *Holy Bible* infallibly confirms that the lights of the firmament are intended for many purposes, including “for” signs:

- “And God said: Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night, and let them be for *signs*, and for seasons, and for days and years: To shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth. And it was so done. And God made two great lights: a greater light to rule the day; and a lesser light to rule the night: and the *stars.*” (*Genesis 1:14-16*)

- A **STAR** SHALL RISE out of Jacob and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel...” (*Numbers 24:7*)

- “The sun, and the moon, and the *stars* being bright, and sent forth for profitable uses, are obedient.” (*Baruch 6:59*)

- “Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his *star* in the east, and are come to adore him.” (*Matthew 2:2*)

- “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the *stars*; and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves; Men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved.” (*Luke 21:26*)

Stars remind us that God is the Creator and that we are the created; simultaneously, they remind us that the “works of God show forth His glory, that His law is greatly to be esteemed and loved,” and “that mankind cannot comprehend His power and wisdom.” [\[117\]](#)

Silently, the countless number of “jewels” in the night sky also speaks of God’s majesty, love, mercy and justice:

- “Dost not thou think that God is higher than heaven, and is elevated above the height of the *stars*?” (*Job 22:12*)

- “And the *stars* have given light in their watches, and rejoiced...” (*Baruch 3:34*)

- “O Lord Our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth! For thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens... Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise, because of thy enemies, that thou mayest destroy the enemy and the avenger. For I will behold thy heavens, the works of thy fingers: the moon and the *stars* which thou hast

founded. What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him?" (*Psalms 8:2-5*)

Recalling that Scripture passages often possess both a literal and spiritually figurative meaning, we also know that in the Old Testament, stars also signify the elect. "In *Genesis*, the patriarchs, head of the twelve tribes of Israel, are also called **stars**. And the words of *Daniel* (7:10) cannot be restricted to the priests only of the Antiochean persecution but surely embrace all martyrs of that ordeal. If the chosen people of the Old Testament are called stars, much more appropriately so the true believers of the Church of Jesus Christ," [\[118\]](#)—i.e., true believers in Jesus Christ are practicing members of the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church that He established. The members on earth are called the Church Militant, those in Purgatory are the Church Suffering, and those in Heaven are the Church Triumphant. The Church on earth is also called the kingdom of God on earth, the Body of Christ, and the Catholic City. The elect (the Church Militant) are also called *the just* or *the people of God*, because they are the souls of predestination, meaning the souls whom God knows shall remain on the narrow path of redemption and attain salvation. St. Anthony of Padua expressed it thusly: "The saints are like the stars. In His providence, Christ conceals them in a hidden place that they may not shine before others when they might wish to do so. Yet they are always ready to exchange the quiet of contemplation for the works of mercy as soon as they perceive in their heart the invitation of Christ."

Even though it may seem to stand alone, each "star" (i.e., each person) has a unique and spiritual purpose to fulfill and, by doing so, adds to the beauty of "heaven" (the biblical, symbolic language for "the Church"). Moreover, God knows the names of every "star" as well as their total number. As shall be seen, we may discern depths of meaning in the following Scripture quotes, which may be literal, spiritual, figurative, prophetic, or a combination of them.

For example, in the literal sense, "stars" are the material stars observed in the night sky but, in the spiritual sense, "stars" which remain "in heaven" are human beings who shall attain everlasting life. "Jerusalem" is literally the actual ancient holy city, yet it is also a figure-type for either the Virgin Mary or the future Catholic City that would be founded by the Messiah, Jesus Christ. "Israel" denotes the elect, while "heaven" literally indicates the skies above but it, too, is spiritually symbolic for the Church:

- “I alone am not able to bear you: for the Lord your God hath multiplied you, and you are this day as the **stars** of heaven, for multitude.” (*Deuteronomy 1:10*)

- “And you shall remain few in number, who before were as the **stars** of heaven for multitude, because thou heardest not the voice of the Lord thy God.” (*Deuteronomy 28:62*)

- “The Lord buildeth up Jerusalem: he will gather together the dispersed of Israel. Who healeth the broken of heart, and bindeth up their bruises. Who telleth the number of the **stars**: and calleth them all by their names. Great is Our Lord, and great is his power: and of his wisdom there is no number.” (*Psalms 146:3-5*)

- “The glory of the **stars** is the beauty of heaven; the Lord enlighteneth the world on high.” (*Ecclesiasticus. 43:10*)

- “O ye **stars** of heaven, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all forever.” (*Daniel 3:63*)

- “And there are bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial: but, one is the glory of the celestial, and another of the terrestrial. One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the **stars**. For **star** differeth from star in glory.” (*I Corinthians 15:40-41*)

In the Old Testament, **stars** also symbolize kings [\[119\]](#) (or what we today call leaders of nations) as well as teachers of God’s Laws and those of His Church. These teachers could refer not only to priests and theologians, but also to teaching nuns, lay catechists, or any Christian who instruct others in the traditional Catholic Faith:

- “But they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that instruct many to justice, as **stars** for all eternity.” (*Daniel 12:3*)

In the *Apocalypse*, the Lord speaks of giving the morning star to “he that shall overcome,” yet in another passage, Jesus—who is Priest, Prophet, and King—calls Himself the **Morning Star**:

- “And he that shall overcome, and keep my works unto the end, I will give him power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as the vessel of a potter they shall be broken, As I also have received of my Father: and I will give him the morning **star**. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” (*Apocalypse 2: 26-29*)

- “I, Jesus, have sent my angel, to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning **star**.”

(*Apocalypse 22:16*)

Elsewhere in the *Book of Revelations*, **stars** indicate a group who occupy offices of high estate; they symbolize the Catholic hierarchy (**bishops and priests**). The ordained clergy alone can offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist, forgive and absolve sins, bless, etc. As Rev. Kramer was careful to note, “The highest function of the hierarchy is worshipping God and offering the worship of the entire membership to Him.” [\[120\]](#)

Within the hierarchy, the first degree of rank consists of the bishops of the Church, who are also called “angels” by the Lord in the *Apocalypse* to distinguish them from priests of lesser title. Bishops are “high priests” who can administer all the Sacraments that affect the society of the Church and also perform certain sacerdotal functions that lower-ranking priests usually cannot—for example, Confirmation (which a priest can administer but only under certain circumstances and only with his bishop’s permission), Holy Orders, and the consecration of a new church and its altar. The secondary degree is comprised of priests. [\[121\]](#) Thus, Our Lord speaks in the *Apocalypse* of *seven stars*, whom he also calls *angels* (bishops) of the seven churches, while the seven candlesticks represent seven churches (what we today would call seven dioceses or larger parish areas where the Church is established among the people):

- “I am the First and the Last...Write therefore the things which thou hast seen...The mystery of the seven **stars**, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven **stars** are the angels of the seven churches. And the seven candlesticks are the seven churches.” (*Apocalypse 1:20*)

Finally, we come to the apocalyptic passage, which is mentioned many times in this book and which may be the most well known throughout the Christian world. It is also the one that many believe is the infallible prophecy foretelling the authentic Marian apparitions of the Modern Age, which opened with Our Lady’s appearance at Guadalupe, began anew in 18th century Europe (especially in France), and then culminated in the public and sensible signs at Fatima in Portugal, the country long called “the land of Holy Mary”:

- “And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve **stars**...” (*Apocalypse 12:1*)

This woman is understood to be a figure-type of both the Virgin Mary and the Church; certainly, it is a prophecy rich in mystery. Of this verse, St. Louis Marie de Montfort wrote, “St. John the Evangelist saw a woman crowned with twelve stars, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet. According to the commentators, this woman is the Blessed Virgin Mary, with her virtues and her privileges, especially that of her divine maternity.” [\[122\]](#)

Considering that, at Fatima in 1917, stars appeared at high noon, announcing the Blessed Mother’s appearance to the people, and recalling the profound Scriptural meanings of stars as signs, is it not within faith and reason to believe that the Lord our God wishes His people to persevere in the Catholic faith, despite all the obstacles and crosses they must endure in this age of spiritual deprivation, and to contemplate and imitate the virtues of His Virgin Mother, the Queen of all Saints, who once stood at the Foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior?

The Lady and the Symbol of a Star

Like her Divine Son, the Virgin Mother of God is also called the Morning Star. In historic time, she appeared before her Son and she does so again before His Second Coming. Like the “morning star” of the earthly sky, she always appears before the dawn, the rising of the “day star” (the sun, which is the material symbol of her Son and Savior, Jesus Christ). St. Alphonsus de Liguori reminds us, “In the revelations of St. Bridget, Mary is called ‘*Star preceding the sun,*’ giving us thereby to understand that when devotion towards the divine Mother begins to manifest itself in a soul that is in a state of sin, it is a certain mark that before long God will enrich it with His grace.” [\[123\]](#)

In other words, Mary, the Morning Star is the “anticipatory star” or “demonstrative star” of Christ (the day star). At Fatima, the sensible signs given to the people, the loving and motherly message and prophecies given by the Virgin Mary to the three shepherd children, and the fulfillment of the promised sign—the Great Miracle of the Sun—reminds us again that she is indeed, the Morning Star who arrives shortly before the “Sun”—i.e., her Divine Son. All that happened at Fatima brings to mind the words of St. Peter: “*And we have the more firm prophetic word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*” [\[124\]](#)

The Lady Mary is likewise known as the Evening Star, the brightest star

in the heavens, guiding weary travelers through the darkest hours of their lifelong journey. For many reasons, the Evening Star is also hailed as “Star of the Sea.” In Latin, her name *Maria* derives from “Maris,” which means “sea.” Her Hebrew name is *Miryam* but in Aramaic, Our Lord’s and Our Lady’s native language, it is *Mariam* which means “bitter” or “bitterness.” According to St. Isidore of Seville (+636 A.D.), her name also means “enlightener” for she brought forth Christ, the Light of the World; the same saint also observed that in the Syriac language, her name means “Lady.”

[\[125\]](#)

“For Mary means a bitter sea, star of the sea, the illuminated or illuminatrix,” St. Bonaventure (+1274 A.D.) once penned. “Mary is interpreted as *Lady*. Mary is a bitter sea to the demons; to men, she is the Star of the Sea; to the angels, she is Illuminatrix, and to all creatures, she is Lady.” [\[126\]](#)

In the symbolic language of the Holy Scriptures, the bitter salt-sea (with its fluctuating waves and tempests) represents the world, as well as the “sea of humanity.” Of Mary, who lived in this world but never possessed the spirit of the world, St. Aelred (+1167 A.D.) wrote: “Her name means *Star of the Sea*; no doubt the *Star of this sea* which is the world. Therefore, we ought to lift up our eyes to this Star that has appeared on earth...in order that she may lead us, in order that she may enlighten us, in order that she may show us these steps so that we shall know them, in order that she may help us so that we may be able to ascend.” [\[127\]](#)

St. Thomas Aquinas (+1274 A.D.) said, “Mary means Star of the Sea, for as mariners are guided to port by the ocean star, so Christians attain to glory through Mary’s maternal intercession.” [\[128\]](#)

Finally, we have the beautiful insight of St. Louis de Montfort, who in the early 16th century wrote: “God the Father gathered all the waters together and called them the seas or *maria* (Latin, seas]. He gathered all His grace together and called it Mary or *Maria*...this immense treasury is none other than Mary whom the saints call the ‘treasury of the Lord.’ From her fullness, all men are made rich.” [\[129\]](#)

The Virtues of the Virgin Mary

Among the meanings already explained, stars may also represent a plentitude of virtues and/or profound privileges. In the history of salvation, the number “12” is “the perfect number, God’s number” or “the number of completion.” [\[130\]](#) Recalling the crown of twelve stars worn by the woman

of the *Apocalypse*, who is herself a “great sign appearing in heaven,” we might ask ourselves: “Exactly what are the virtues of the Virgin Mary?”

In making that inquiry (in the hopes of imitating Our Lord’s Immaculate Mother), we recall that in the sacred history of the Church the number “12” is meant only as a *symbol* of completion. We therefore cannot literally limit Our Lady’s virtues to twelve. For example, we may consider the holy insights of St. John Eudes who, in recognizing the many Marian figure-types in the Old Testament, referred to twelve *specific* types among a greater number when he wrote the following:

“Among the many images and representations of the Admirable Heart of Mary, **I can distinguish twelve of surpassing beauty**. Six of them are found in the principal divisions of the universe; namely, the heavens, the sun, the center of the earth, the inexhaustible fountain of Genesis, the sea and the Garden of Eden. The six others appear in six of the most important manifestations witnessed by the world from the time of Moses to the death of Our Lord. They are the burning bush of Mount Horeb, the mysterious harp of David, the magnificent throne of Solomon, the marvelous Temple of Jerusalem, the miraculous furnace of Babylon, and the holy mount of Calvary.” [\[131\]](#)

To return to the many virtues of Our Lady—which are symbolized by the number 12—we look to a prayer known as *[The Little Crown of the Twelve Stars of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)*, in which there is an exquisite line that simply declares, “*Thy virtues, O Virgin, surpass **the stars** in number.*” This centuries-old prayer was offered to God by many saints including St. Joseph Calasanctius and St. John Berchmans. It is known that St. Louis de Montfort recommended this prayer to his religious foundations (the Montfort Fathers and the Daughters of Wisdom) as a morning prayer. The saint added to each *Hail Mary* a short invocation to the Virgin, and he also urged those who embraced the devotion to Jesus through Mary to pray *The Little Crown*. [\[132\]](#)

This prayer is divided into three sets of “crowns.” The first is the Crown of Excellence, the second is the Crown of Power, and the third is the Crown of Goodness. Each crown hails a “set” of four inestimable virtues. The *Crown of Excellence* honors “the divine maternity of the Blessed Virgin, her ineffable virginity, her purity without stain, and her innumerable virtues.” The *Crown of Power* honors “the royalty of the Blessed Virgin, her magnificence, her universal mediation, and the strength of her rule.” The

Crown of Goodness extols the unfathomable mercy of the Blessed Virgin toward four types of people: sinners, the poor, the just, and the dying. [\[133\]](#)

The Other Signs at Fatima

It is no coincidence that the virtues honored in *The Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin Mary* are the same holy qualities Our Lady chose to display at Fatima. To declare that the signs and the complete message of Fatima highlight the Virgin's virtues and privileges is certainly an understatement—for the time has already arrived in which God wishes to establish worldwide devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

With that said, the following sections are the signs that shall be examined:

1. Most of the witnesses who were closest to the spot where the Lady appeared heard a far-away, indescribable sound, perceived only in response to Lucia's words. [\[134\]](#)

2. In July, just as the apparition began, the atmosphere became yellow as gold. [\[135\]](#) As one witness stated, "The luminosity of the sky noticeably decreased, as during an eclipse, the whole time the ecstasy of the children lasted." [\[136\]](#) In August, when the children were abducted by the Masonic mayor and were not present for the Vision, the people saw "all the colors of the rainbow, pink, red, blue....The trees seemed to be made not of leaves but of flowers...The ground came out in colors and so did our clothes. The lanterns fixed to the arch looked like gold." [\[137\]](#)

3. At the height of a Portuguese summer, the very hot temperature suddenly dropped to a pleasant degree, accompanied by "a cool fresh breeze." [\[138\]](#)

4. Also at the July 1917 apparition, a "large clap of thunder" was heard just seconds before the eldest child, Lucia, indicated the departure of the Lady. The thunder shook the ground, so that a small arch placed by the apparition site "trembled as if in an earthquake." [\[139\]](#) In August 1917, when the children were not present, an extremely loud boom of thunder so badly frightened the people that many scattered and ran, thinking they would be killed. [\[140\]](#)

5. Again in August, a flash of lightning, following the thunder, also garnered the attention of the now-silenced crowd. This "flash," always seen by the children, served as the sign of the Virgin's approach. [\[141\]](#) The flash was not usually perceived by the crowd but, this time, the people saw it. [\[142\]](#)

6. During the Apparition of September 13, 1917, a greater number of onlookers observed a shower of small white objects—described by witnesses as either as petals, snowflakes, dove-shaped forms, stars, or roses—all of which gently fell from the sky and disappeared before touching the ground. [\[143\]](#)

As we shall see, all of these supernatural signs also hold a great significance in Divine Revelation. Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the unusual marvels at Fatima are intended to remind the Church, and all peoples of the world, that God has willed to give His graces and peace to mankind through the hands of His Immaculate Mother, who is the cause of our salvation, Jesus Christ.

PART 6

Signs of Grace: The Silent Parables of Fatima

“Through thee we have access to the Son, O thou giver of grace, and Mother of our salvation.”

–*St. Bernard of Clairvaux*

During His public life, Jesus spoke to great crowds of people in the form of parables, telling “plain, simple stories easily remembered by plain, simple people, even without learning or talent. In these He clothed His divine doctrines...taking His illustrations from those common and obvious objects with which they were most familiar, screening the Divine Mysteries at the same time from the ill-disposed and bigoted who listened to the parables but would not understand their meaning.” [\[144\]](#) In a fashion similar to Our Lord’s divine parables, the sensible signs witnessed by pilgrims present at the 1917 Fatima apparitions strengthened and consoled the faithful, converted souls, counter-acted the doubters, and gently emphasized the divine doctrines revealed by God to His Church.

The first parts of this work concisely examined many of the wonders seen and heard at Fatima. While those signs are rich and profound in their meaning, the next two parts (Parts 7 and 8) of this treatise shall likewise be succinct although, like St. Bernard of Clairvaux, this writer declares with filial love: “Of Mary, there is never enough.” Part 9 examines the “Great Sign,” the promised Miracle. However, from that point, Parts 10–18 grow in detail in this continuing study of other aspects of Fatima, including our ongoing conversions (growth in the interior life, also called the spiritual life), the Third Secret, our adoration and imitation of Christ, our devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Sacred Heart, the Precious Blood, and more. With that said, we look to the following signs given at Fatima from June through September, 1917:

• **In June and July 1917, many witnesses closest to the spot where the Lady appeared heard a far-away, indescribable sound, perceived only in response to Lucia’s words. [\[145\]](#) Others said they “heard something like the murmur of a very fine, but unintelligible voice.”**

[\[146\]](#) What else could be this murmur other than the Virgin’s voice?

In most instances, the Holy Scriptures describe a heavenly voice as *loud*

or *great* or *strong*. At Fatima, however, it seems only those who first came to the apparition site (and only in the months of June and July) received the favor of “distantly” hearing Our Lady’s voice. The fortunate ones included the faithful Maria Carreira, who had taken it upon herself to tidy the area around the holmoak tree, placed flowers and a silk bow upon it, and built over it a humble arch with lanterns on each side.

Years later, the exact spot of the apparition was marked by a statue of Our Lady of Fatima, standing upon a marble pillar. The statue and the pillar are directly in front of the Chapel of Apparitions (the first sanctuary built in honor of the Virgin of Fatima), and all three are now enclosed within the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary.

It is as though the Virgin of Fatima, the Queen of Prophets, took the prophet Zachariah’s words for her own: “And they that are far off, shall come and shall build in the temple of the Lord: *and you shall know that the Lord of hosts sent me to you*. But this shall come to pass, if hearing you will hear the voice of your God.” [\[147\]](#)

• **In July, August, and September, when certain signs indicated the arrival of the Virgin, the atmosphere became yellow as gold.** [\[148\]](#)

In the history of the Fatima apparitions, July (the first time the atmosphere turned to yellow-gold) is pivotal, because Our Lady gave the three young children the Great Secret of Fatima in its three parts. It was also in July that the Mother of God promised, “In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe.” [\[149\]](#) As word spread of the coming miracle, the crowds grew greater each month—as did the signs at Fatima. In October, the promise was kept, the children were given the Lady’s name and heard her final request, and the foretold miracle was the “great sign”—the Miracle of the Sun. So why, in the three months preceding the final “public” apparition, was the color of yellow-gold made manifest?

Gold represents the glory of God, His divine nature, and His revelation. Yellow-gold is the color of the sun, which symbolizes Jesus, the Son of God, the Lord and Savior of the world. Gold is also “the symbol of unselfish and complete immolation to God” [\[150\]](#)—i.e., the virtue of charity, which St. Louis de Montfort called the “gold of love” and “the fulfillment of the whole law.” [\[151\]](#) (On a vital side note, the lives of the three Fatima visionaries were those of heroic charity and sacrifice, reminding “the world that it is necessary to avoid sin, and to make reparation to an offended God,

by prayer and penance.” [152])

Even in ancient times, purest gold was considered a precious metal, and it was one reserved for the Ark of the Covenant, the Temple, and all the vessels that served the Lord. St. Alphonsus de Liguori wrote, “In the book of Exodus, we read that God commanded Moses to make a mercy-seat of **the purest gold**, because it was thence that He would speak to him. *Thou shalt make also a propitiatory of the purest gold...There will I give orders, and will speak to thee.*” [153]

The root of the word “propitiatory” means to pacify or placate, to conciliate, to reconcile; it also means to intercede, to calm, to mediate, or to atone. All of these verbs of “being” or action apply to both Our Lord and Our Lady. Like the Ark of the Covenant which it covered, the Old Testament propitiatory or “mercy seat” is also a figure-type for the Virgin Mary, upon whom God rests and speaks to His people—just as He did in Old Testament history and as He does again in modern times. [154]

St. John the Evangelist states in the *Apocalypse*, in which he writes of things present and future, [155] that an angel took him up in spirit to “a great and high mountain” and showed him “the heavenly Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,” [156] saying that the city itself is “pure gold, like to glass” and “the street of the city, as pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” [157] This heavenly Jerusalem also serves as a figure-type for the Virgin Mary.

• **As one Fatima witness stated, “The luminosity of the sky noticeably decreased, as during an eclipse, the whole time the ecstasy of the children lasted.”** [158]

It was at Fatima that Mary, the Queen of Prophets, delivered a heavenly command, in a manner more majestic and striking than that of the Old Testament prophets. Our Lady of Fatima, like the prophets before her, called sinners to conversion, foretold great blessings when God’s commands are heeded, and warned of dire sufferings if they are not. The dimming of the sun at Fatima calls to mind that which biblical prophets called a “day of darkness” [159]—a time of tribulation and distress due to God’s wrath against the multitude of sins.

A “day of darkness” can also signify the day of the Lord, of which the prophet Amos warned: “Woe to them that desire the day of the Lord: to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.” [160] In one interpretation of *Apocalypse* 8:12, wherein a great mountain

(denoting a kingdom), burning with fire, slides into the sea, the star Wormwood falls, and a third part of the sun, moon, and stars darken, it is stated:

“The prophecy of our text foreshows a time of trouble for the Church and an obscuration of her splendor and her power to enlighten the world. The prophets called any misfortune that dimmed the luster of the theocracy a day of darkness. Likewise, when they prophesy defeat and humiliation for other nations they predict it by obscuration of the sun, moon, and stars. Isaias speaks thus to Babylon (XIII.10) and Ezechiel to Egypt (XXXII.7). Joel calls the coming war with the Babylonians ‘a day of darkness and of gloominess’ (II.2); of the temporal extinction of the theocracy in the Babylonian Captivity he says, ‘the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars have withdrawn their shining.’ Ezechiel likewise calls the extinction of the theocracy ‘a cloudy and dark day’ (XXXIV.12) [\[161\]](#)...Thus Amos prophesied upon the kingdom of Israel (VIII.9).” [\[162\]](#) To briefly state it, then, a “sign” like the darkening of the sun foretells that God’s judgment on His people (and possibly all nations) is near.

Remembering that the material sun of our solar system is also “the” symbol of Christ, the *Gospel of Luke* relates that when Christ was crucified, “there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened...”[\[163\]](#) This darkness was supernatural, for Christ was condemned at the time of Passover, which was celebrated during the full moon—at which time a solar eclipse is not possible. The sun was darkened because Jesus, the God-man, was dying, of His own free will, to save His people from their sins.

At Fatima, the decreased sunlight, so similar to that of an eclipse, was also supernatural, lasting only during the time of the Virgin’s visit. In fact, the dimming of the sun at Fatima might also be attributed to the many glories of Mary, of which St Alphonsus de Liguori wrote, [\[164\]](#) stating that in the *Canticles*, Our Lady is called “bright as the sun.” [\[165\]](#) St. Bonaventure said of the Blessed Mother, “She is more beautiful than the sun” and Lucia, the only Fatima visionary to reach adulthood and an elderly age, said that the Lady was “more brilliant than the sun.” [\[166\]](#)

Perhaps, too, the diffused sun at Fatima manifested Our Lady’s glory before God but also her clemency toward her Divine Son’s people, for the Virgin Mother of God came to the modern world to remind us of what St. Peter taught: “But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy

nation, a purchased people: that you may declare his virtues, who hath called you *out of darkness into his marvellous light.*” [167]

• **At the height of a Portuguese summer, the very hot temperature suddenly dropped to a pleasant degree, accompanied by “a cool fresh breeze.”** [168]

In the Holy Scriptures, when the Lord our God spoke individually to a prophet, in order to give His people a message of mercy and/or a warning of His just retribution for their infidelity, He did so in a quiet yet awesome and breath-taking way. For example, in the third book of *Kings*, we read a passage in which “the word of the Lord came unto” Elias, the prophet, [169] who lived during a perilous time when the people of Israel had again forsaken the Lord’s covenant and were waging a war against God and His servants. [170] Through Elias’ intercession, two miracles had already occurred on Mount Carmel, but Jezebel the queen sought to take the prophet’s life.

“And he [i.e., the word of the Lord] said to him [Elias, the prophet]: Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord: and behold the Lord passeth, and a great and strong wind before the Lord over throwing the mountains, and breaking the rocks in pieces: the Lord is not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake: the Lord is not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire: the Lord is not in the fire, and after the fire **a whistling of gentle air.** And when Elias heard it, he covered his face with his mantle... and behold a voice unto him.” [171]

Is it not possible that, like the whistling of gentle air that manifested to Elias the very Presence of God, the sudden but soothing change of temperature and the gentle, cooling breeze declared the Virgin Mary’s presence—she who is the Perpetual Tabernacle of the Holy Trinity? St. Louis de Montfort, when teaching that we must accomplish all of our actions *in*, *with*, and *through* Mary, explained that she is “the true terrestrial paradise of the new Adam” (Jesus), writing: “It is only the Holy Ghost who can make us know the hidden truth of these figures of material things. There is in this place [the Virgin Mary] **an air of perfect purity; a fair sun**, without shadow, of the Divinity; a fair day, without night, of the Sacred Humanity [of Jesus]; a continuing burning furnace of love, where all the iron that is cast into it is changed, by excessive heat, to gold.” [172]

Finally, for the child visionaries and the thousands of pilgrims who came to Fatima, the delicate and considerate changes in the elements during

Our Lady's apparitions may well have served as a foretaste of Heaven. After all, in the *Apocalypse*, St. John relates: "They shall no more hunger nor thirst, ***neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat.*** For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." [\[173\]](#)

PART 7

Mother of God, Refuge of Sinners

“Now therefore children, hear me; blessed are they who keep my ways.”

–*Proverbs 8:32*

In this seventh part on the public, sensible signs witnessed by crowds during the May-October 1917 apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima, we look to the phenomena of thunder, the shaking of the ground, lightning, and the atmospheric changes of rainbow colors:

- In July, the month in which the Virgin Mary gave the three child visionaries the Great Secret of Fatima in its three distinct parts, a “large clap of thunder” was heard just seconds before the eldest child, Lucia, suddenly jumped up from her kneeling position, exclaiming, “There she goes! There she goes!” as the Lady departed. The thunder shook the ground, so that a small arch placed by the apparition site “trembled as if in an earthquake.

[\[174\]](#)

- In August, when the children were not present at the apparition site because the mayor had abducted them, a great crowd gathered in anticipation of solar noon, the usual time of Our Lady’s appearance. When the hour arrived, the people heard an extremely loud boom of thunder, which so badly frightened them that many scattered and ran, thinking they would be killed. [\[175\]](#)

- A flash of lightning, following the thunder, was also seen in August, garnering the attention of the now-silenced crowd. This “flash,” always seen by the children, served as the sign of the Virgin’s approach [\[176\]](#) but had never been previously perceived by the people.

Thunder, a Small Tremor, and Lightning

In the Scriptures, the sound of thunder, the appearance of lightning, or the trembling of an earthquake announce *a direct manifestation from the Lord or of the Lord*. **Thunder** denotes God’s “voice”—i.e., His irrevocable declaration of His truth, mercy and judgment: “The Lord shall thunder from heaven: and the Most High shall give forth His voice.” [\[177\]](#) (Here it should be noted that only twice was thunder heard at Fatima—in July, after

the Great Secret was divulged, and an even greater “boom” in August when the plotting mayor kidnapped the children. Recalling that thunder denotes God’s voice, often in judgment, we should also remember that Our Lady would, in August, tell the children, “If you had not been taken away to the City, the miracle would have been greater.”) [178]

Lightning is the sign of God’s divine majesty and His wisdom and power in His wonderful works, His miracles, and His judgment. [179] In the *Book of Exodus*, thunder and lightning together announce the Holy Presence of the Lord God immediately before He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses: “*And now the third day was come, and the morning appeared: and behold thunders began to be heard, and lightning to flash, and a very thick cloud to cover the mount...and the people that were in the camp, feared.*” [180]

Both thunder and lightning are likewise found in the *Psalms*, representing Divine Revelation which enlightens the interior life of the soul, when King David mysteriously addressed the Lord: “*The voice of thy thunder in a wheel. Thy lightnings enlightened the world: the earth shook and trembled.*” [181] An eyewitness of the Fatima apparition in July (again, the month in which the Virgin Mary disclosed the Great Secret for the salvation of the Church and the world) inadvertently chose similar words to those of King David when, at the moment the child Lucia exclaimed the Lady’s leave-taking, “*the earth trembled like an earthquake.*” [182]

In searching the *Holy Bible* from the *Old Testament* to the *Apocalypse*, there are a total of 17 references to an “earthquake” or “earthquakes.” In most instances, **an earthquake is the predominant sign of God’s explicit action to save the faithful (spiritually and sometimes physically) even as it confounds the obstinate.**

When the Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold God’s judgment on reprobates, he prophesied: “*And it shall be at an instant suddenly. A visitation shall come from the Lord of hosts **in thunder, and with earthquake...***” [183] The *Gospel of Matthew* records an earthquake at the moment of Christ’s death and a “great earthquake” at His Resurrection. [184] The *Acts of the Apostles* also tells of a great earthquake which shook the foundations of the prison in which were held Paul and Silus, released their “bands” (bonds), and opened their prison doors. [185]

In the *Apocalypse*, St. John the Evangelist alludes to lightning, voices, and thunders (together) *four* times, [186] while an earthquake (or a “great

earthquake”) is mentioned either alone or with other signs, a total of five times. [187] The first instance occurs when he is granted a vision of the Lord’s throne in Heaven: “*And from the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.*” [188] Lightning, voices, and thunders are not mentioned again until Chapter 8, but this time “a great earthquake” is also revealed to him: “*And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it on the earth, and there were thunders and voices and lightnings, and a great earthquake.*” [189]

St. John was later ordered to “measure the temple of God, and the altar and them that adore therein,” [190] and thereafter was told of the two witnesses who will publicly testify to Christ whilst resisting the actual person of anti-Christ. [191] He then wrote again of lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, which this time accompany the Ark of the Covenant (which has already been explained as a historical figure-type of the Virgin Mary, because it was wholly consecrated to the Lord. Furthermore, it was never to be touched by any man; the Lord overshadowed the Mercy-Seat of the Ark, just as the Holy Ghost overshadowed the Virgin at the Incarnation of Christ. Like the Virgin, the Ark contained the Bread of Heaven, a figure-type for Christ):

“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest render reward to thy servants the prophets and the saints, and to them that fear thy name, little and great, and shouldest destroy them who have corrupted the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven: and the ark of his testament was seen in his temple, and there were **lightnings**, and **voices**, and **an earthquake**, and great hail.” [192]

In addition to the symbolism of an earthquake already described, Fr. Herman B. Kramer, author of *The Book of Destiny*, stated his opinion: “Revolutions and overthrows of governments are also called earthquakes in prophetic diction.” [193] The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which arose during the very months of the Fatima apparitions, certainly could be described as a “great earthquake,” especially since Our Lady warned that, if her requests were not granted, Russia would spread her errors (plural) *throughout the world*. [194]

● **Rainbow Colors:** In July (again, the month wherein Our Lady revealed the “Great Secret”), there was an atmospheric change, in which

people saw “all the colors of the rainbow, pink, red, blue...The trees seemed to be made not of leaves but of flowers...The ground came out in colors and so did our clothes. The lanterns fixed to the arch looked like gold.” [\[195\]](#) In October, the rainbow colors would appear again during the promised miracle.

At Fatima, a humble arch had been placed in honor over the young holmoak tree, because “the Lady” always appeared upon it. As previously mentioned, a witness testified that, in July, the lanterns placed upon it appeared as gold—even though everyone and everything else were seen in rainbow colors. Why might this be?

Earlier in this work, it was explained that the color of gold represents the glory of God, His divine nature, and His revelation. Yellow-gold is the color of the sun, which symbolizes the Son of God, the Lord and Savior of the world. Gold is also “the symbol of unselfish and complete immolation to God”—i.e., the virtue of charity, which St. Louis de Montfort called the “gold of love” and “the fulfillment of the whole law.” It was further explained that, even in ancient times, purest gold was considered a precious metal, and it was one reserved for the Ark of the Covenant, the Temple, and all the vessels of the Lord.” At God’s command to Moses, the “mercy-seat” of the Ark was likewise made of the purest gold, for from it He would give orders and speak to the prophet. Like the Ark of the Covenant which it covered, the Old Testament propitiatory or ‘mercy-seat” is also a figure-type for the Virgin Mary, upon whom God rests and speaks to His people—just as He did in Old Testament history and as He does again in modern times.

Next, we examine the atmospheric phenomena wherein Fatima witnesses observed all the colors of the rainbow, on the ground and on their clothes. Let us consider a previous referral to the *Apocalypse*, when St. John the Evangelist was privileged to see a vision of God’s throne, wherein he described it as follows:

“After these things I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, as it were, of a trumpet speaking with me, said: Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must be done hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne one sitting. And he that sat, was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine stone; and *there was a rainbow round about the throne*, in sight like unto an emerald.” [\[196\]](#)

St. Alphonsus de Liguori wrote that the rainbow encircling the throne

of God is “an express figure of Mary.” [197] St. Alphonsus then quoted a priest of the episcopate, known as Cardinal Vitalis: “The rainbow round the throne is Mary, who softens the judgment and sentence of God against sinners.” He also cited St. Bernadine of Siena, who said “it was of this rainbow that God spoke when He promised Noah that He would place it in the clouds as a sign of peace, that on looking at it He might remember the eternal peace which He had covenanted to man. *I will set My bow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of a covenant between Me and between the earth...and I shall see it, and shall remember the everlasting covenant.* [198] ‘Mary,’ says the saint, ‘is this bow of eternal peace, for as God on seeing it remembers the peace promised to the earth, so does He, at the prayers of Mary, forgive the crimes of sinners, and confirm His peace with them.’”

In the tenth chapter of the *Apocalypse*, St. John revealed: “And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a **rainbow** was on his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth. And he cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth. And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.” [199]

In an interpretation shared in *The Book of Destiny*, “This vision presents a powerful angel stepping into the wicked world to make a momentous revelation...His face shines like the face of Christ and reflects *a rainbow* from the cloud. In this apocalyptic verse, the word ‘**rainbow**’ signifies a message of mercy although it forebodes the direst of all God’s judgments upon the world.” [200]

Finally, we might recall that a rainbow usually boasts *seven* colors—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple (indigo), and violet (sometimes perceived as a deep pink, because, depending on the individual, it is possible to see the various hues within a rainbow). In the Church, there are seven Sacraments, seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Seven Last Words of Christ, the Seven Sorrows of Mary, the Seven Joys of Mary, the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, and the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy.

It is also intriguing to discover an observation made by Fr. James L. Meagher, a priest of the 19th century: “All through the *Bible* runs the sacred number *seven*, and in sevens the *Gospels* were written in the original Greek.” [201] Lastly, according to Fr. Herman Bernard Kramer’s

discernment of Catholic symbolism, the number “7” is considered as God’s sacred number, the number of spiritual perfection, and the fundamental number of the *Apocalypse*. [\[202\]](#)

PART 8

A Shower of Petals: Our Lady of the Rosary, Mediatrice of All Graces

“...after Christ, we find in Mary the end of the law and the fulfillment of the figures and oracles.”

–**Pope St. Pius X, "Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum," 1904 A.D.**

“When will people learn that it is very easy to secure the friendship of Mary and that her protection destroys all the wiles of the devils?” asked Fr. H. O’Lavery, the author of *The Mother of God and Her Glorious Feasts*. “The friendship of Mary is not passing, like so many worldly friendships, which is based often on love of self rather than on love of others. Our Blessed Lady only wishes to bestow graces upon us and to bring us within the Sacred Heart of Jesus.” [\[203\]](#)

It may seem strange to call the Mother of God “our friend,” but did not Jesus call the Apostles His friends? “*I will not now call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you.*” [\[204\]](#)

To state a truth in the most simple of terms, the 1917 Fatima apparitions highlight the motherly solicitude and the friendship of Mary, who inevitably identified herself as the Lady of the Rosary while revealing herself as the Mediatrice of All Graces. In this section on the public, sensible signs manifested to the witnesses of the Fatima apparitions, we look at two signs yet to be examined:

- Onlookers to the third Apparition, which occurred on July 13, 1917 (the day the Virgin Mary gave to the children the Great Secret in its three distinct parts), testified to atmospheric changes, in which people saw “all the colors of the rainbow, pink, red, blue....***The trees seemed to be made not of leaves but of flowers...***”

- During the Apparition of September 13, the month before the promised Miracle, the sensible signs increased and included a shower of small white objects—described either as ***petals, snowflakes, dove-shaped forms, stars, or roses***—all of which gently fell from the sky and disappeared

before touching the ground. [\[205\]](#)

Flowering Trees at the Height of Summer

“*The trees seemed to be made not of leaves but of flowers...*” In this one sign alone, we will see that the flowers are a multi-faceted emblem of both the Virgin Mary and the Catholic Church established by Our Lord Jesus Christ, which alone offers the spiritual means to gain eternal salvation, and the heavenly garden of Paradise.

- Firstly, it is thought-provoking when one notices that witnesses of the July apparition never mentioned a likeness to a specific type of flower—for example, an apple, peach, pear, or cherry blossom. Instead, they simply used the generic term “flowers.” The significance? All beautiful flowers symbolize the Virgin Mary’s holiness and divine prerogatives.

To cite only a limited number of examples, the white *lily* (also known as the “Annunciation Lily”) is a symbol of Our Lady’s Immaculate purity; *impatiens* (called “Our Lady’s Earrings”) denote the Virgin’s ears which heard God’s word and kept it; the small *violet* reminds us of Mary’s humility; the lovely “*Lady’s Slipper*” flower calls to mind the Virgin’s charity when she traveled on foot to the hill country to assist her elder cousin, St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist; the *columbine* represents the Holy Ghost overshadowing Our Lady; the *strawberry*, in flower and yet simultaneously bearing fruits, symbolizes the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, and the *marigold* (“Mary’s Gold”) signifies the glories of Mary, “a woman clothed with the sun” in the *Apocalypse*. [\[206\]](#)

- Secondly, the Old Testament’s *Prophecy of Isaias* foretells, in figurative language, the budding and blossoming of God’s kingdom on earth, the Catholic Church, despite the constant onslaughts against it from without and within: “*The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise: the glory of Libanus is given to it: the beauty of Carmel, and Saron, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the beauty of our God.*” [\[207\]](#)

The Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, came to Fatima with the most urgent of messages to save the Church from the wasteland of desolation, the abomination of desolation. There may also be an implicit allusion to the *Apocalypse*, for the woman crowned with twelve stars flees to the wilderness. It has been shown that the royal woman of the *Apocalypse* is a

figure-type, sometimes for the Virgin Mary and other times for the Church. One could truthfully state that Our Lady has been “chased” out of the Church, for in a great number of parishes there rarely exists any public devotion to her. The apocalyptic dragon, after chasing the woman into the wilderness, then goes out to seek war with her children—those who are still faithful to Christ and His Church, who still hold and practice a filial devotion to the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts.

- Thirdly, since flowers on trees produce fruits, it follows that celestial flowers are the signs of graces, given by God through the hands of Our Lady, strengthening the elect in practicing the supernatural virtues. St. Louis de Montfort taught: “If Mary, who is the tree of life, is well cultivated in our soul by fidelity to the practices of this devotion [to Jesus through Mary], she will bear her fruit in her own time, and her fruit is none other than Jesus Christ.” [208] Pope Leo XIII expounded on the doctrine of Mary as Mediatrix of All Graces when he wrote: “With equal truth may it be also affirmed that, by the will of God, Mary is the intermediary through whom is distributed unto us this immense treasure of mercies gathered by God, for mercy and truth were created by Jesus Christ. Thus as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother.” [209]

However, just as Jesus could work no miracles in Nazareth due to unbelief, Fr. H. O’Lavery wrote that “Mary cannot give her gifts to those who will not receive them. How many pass by graces or refuse them, with the result that countless souls are lost. Every grace accepted means the increase of grace in others. Every soul sanctified means the sanctification of countless other souls.” [210] This explanation appears to be another reason for the flowering of the trees, for God primarily acts in the world through people—that is, God acts through those who accept and use well the graces He sends, for the good of their own souls and that of others.

Thus the heavenly flowers which briefly replaced the trees’ natural leaves, an event witnessed at the height of summer (when trees do not blossom but are already growing fruit) and lasting only through the time of Our Lady’s Apparition, also appear to represent the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Hence, the flowering trees represent the virtues and good works necessary for salvation, which are never out of season. “By a voice he saith: Hear me, *ye divine offspring*, and bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters. Send forth flowers, as the lily, and yield a smell, *and bring forth leaves in grace*, and praise with canticles, and bless the Lord in his works.”

[\[211\]](#)

• Fourthly, when explaining why we must accomplish all of our actions “in” the Virgin Mother of God, St. Louis de Montfort, known as the apostle of “true devotion to Jesus through Mary,” wrote: “Thoroughly to understand this practice, we must first know that Our Blessed Lady is the true terrestrial paradise of the New Adam, and that the ancient paradise was but a figure of her...It is in this earthly paradise that *there is the true tree of life*, which has borne Jesus Christ, the Fruit of Life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which has given light unto the world. There are in this divine place *trees planted by the hand of God and watered by His divine unction*, which have borne and daily bear fruits of a divine taste. There are flowerbeds adorned with beautiful and varied *blossoms of virtues*.” [\[212\]](#)

Almost two centuries later, Blessed John Henry Newman said, “A garden is a spot of ground set apart for trees and plants, all good, all various, for things that are sweet to the taste or fragrant in scent, or beautiful to look upon, or useful for nourishment; and accordingly in its spiritual sense it means the home of blessed spirits and holy souls dwelling there together, *souls with both the flowers and the fruits upon them*, which by the careful husbandry of God they have come to bear, *flowers and fruits of grace*, flowers more beautiful and more fragrant than those of any garden, fruits more delicious and exquisite than can be matured by earthly husbandman.”

[\[213\]](#)

He continued, “All that God has made speaks of its Maker; the mountains speak of His eternity; the sun of His immensity, and the winds of His Almightyness. In like manner *flowers and fruits speak of His sanctity, His love, and His providence*; and... since they are found in a garden, therefore a garden has also excellences which speak of God, because it is their home.” [\[214\]](#) This mystical garden of Paradise is likewise a figure-type of the Virgin Mary.

“*My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.*”

[\[215\]](#) Those are the words of the Holy Ghost, speaking of His Beloved—the Virgin that would bear Christ. St. Sophronius (560-638 A.D.) remarked, “Mary was this enclosed garden and sealed fountain, into which no guile could enter, against which no fraud of the enemy could prevail, and who always was holy in mind and body.” Almost six centuries later, St. Bernard said something similar when addressing the Blessed Virgin: “Thou art an enclosed garden, into which the sinner’s hand has never entered to pluck its

flowers.” [216]

• Finally, Blessed Newman reminds us that “our first parents were placed in ‘a garden of pleasure’ shaded by trees, ‘fair to behold and pleasant to eat of,’ with the Tree of Life in the midst, and a river to water the ground. Thus Our Lord, speaking from the cross to the penitent robber, calls the blessed place, the heaven to which He was taking him, ‘paradise,’ or a garden of pleasure. Therefore St. John, in the *Apocalypse*, speaks of heaven, the palace of God, as a garden or paradise, in which was the Tree of Life giving forth its fruits every month.” [217]

A Shower of Signs in September

Other than the Miracle of the Sun, the final sensible sign to examine is the shower of small white objects, described either as *petals*, *snowflakes*, *dove-shaped forms*, *stars*, or *roses*, all of which gently fell from the sky and disappeared before touching the ground.

• **White:** The color white represents purity of mind, heart, and will. It is the symbol of prayer and good works for the conversion of sinners. Additionally, white is comprised of all seven colors of the rainbow and therefore signifies the whole of God’s plan of Redemption.

• **Snow:** In the *Book of Proverbs*, we read: “*She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow: for all her domestics are clothed with double garments,*” a passage that refers to the Virgin. St. Alphonsus de Liguori reminds us that these "domestics" are Mary's clients, and then he cites Cornelius à Lapide who said this double clothing “‘consists in her adorning her faithful servants with the virtues of her Son and with her own,’ and thus clothed they persevere in virtue.” [218]

• **Doves:** “*Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*” [219] From the time of antiquity, a white dove is the symbol of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God. The dove is seen in representations of the Annunciation (the Incarnation of Jesus Christ), the Lord's Baptism, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Mary and the Apostles at Pentecost. The dove is also the symbol of the Sacrament of Confirmation, which means the sacrament of “strengthening,” through which the confirmed person is then called “a soldier of Christ because he is especially deputed to profess the faith strongly and fight for it.” [220]

The dove is also the symbol of the Virgin Mary. St. Alphonsus explained: “Mary was prefigured by the dove which returned to Noah in the Ark with an olive branch in its beak, as a pledge of the peace which God

granted to men. And on this idea St. Bonaventure thus addresses Our Blessed Lady: ‘Thou art the most faithful dove; thou was a sure mediatress [sic] between God and the world, lost in a spiritual deluge; thou, by presenting thyself before God, hast obtained for a lost world peace and salvation.’ Mary, then, was the heavenly dove which brought to a lost world the olive-branch, the sign of mercy, since she in the first place gave us Jesus Christ, who is the source of mercy; and then, by His merits, obtained all graces for us.” [221]

Again, the saint tells how Mary is likened to a dove in the *Canticles*, wherein it is written: “There are...young maidens without number. *One is my dove, my perfect one* (in the Hebrew it is “*my entire, my immaculate one*”) *is but one, she is the only one of her mother.*” [222] St. Alphonsus continued: “All just souls are daughters of divine grace; but amongst these Mary was the *dove* without the gall of sin; the *perfect* one without spot in her origin, the *one* conceived in grace.” [223]

• **Stars**—as mentioned in a previous chapter—remind us that God is the Creator and that we are the created; simultaneously, they remind us that the “works of God show forth His glory, that His law is greatly to be esteemed and loved,” and “that mankind cannot comprehend His power and wisdom.” [224]

Recalling that Scripture passages often possess both a literal and spiritually figurative meaning, we also know that in the Old Testament, *stars* also signify the elect—i.e., true believers in and of the Church, the Body of Christ. “In *Genesis*, the patriarchs, head of the twelve tribes of Israel, are also called **stars**. And the words of *Daniel* (7:10) cannot be restricted to the priests only of the Antiochean persecution but surely embrace all martyrs of that ordeal. If the chosen people are called stars, much more appropriately so the true believers of Jesus Christ.” [225]

In the *Apocalypse*, the Lord speaks of giving the morning star to “he that shall overcome,” yet in another passage, Jesus—who is Priest, Prophet, and King—calls Himself the *Morning Star*. [226] Elsewhere in the *Book of Revelations*, *stars* indicate a group who occupy offices of high estate; they symbolize the Catholic hierarchy (bishops and priests). [227]

Finally, again is repeated the reference to the apocalyptic passage that may be the one most well known throughout the world. It is also the one that many believe is the infallible prophecy foretelling the authentic Marian apparitions of the modern age— and specifically those of Our Lady of

Fatima: “And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve *stars...*” [\[228\]](#)

- **Roses:** The white rose is the symbol of pure love (charity) and beauty of soul, which explains why it is the foremost symbol of the Virgin Mary, who is called the Mystical Rose of Heaven. As the rose is also considered the Queen of Flowers, so Our Lady is hailed as the Queen of Heaven. The rose is likewise an emblem of the Holy Faith, martyrdom, and the secrecy of the Sacrament of Penance, while five roses grouped together symbolize the Five Wounds of Christ, from whence all graces flow. [\[229\]](#)

-SECTION II-

PART 9

October:

The Promised: Sign

“For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars: being compared with the light, she is found before it.”

–*Wisdom 7:9*

As we have seen, from May through October 1917, the hamlet of Fatima, Portugal was graced by the presence of the Virgin Mother of God. Shining brighter than the sun, veiled and gowned in white, adorned with the Star of Esther and a luminous necklace from which hung a brighter orb, with a Rosary suspended from her right arm, the Lady promised three shepherd children, “In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle so that all may see and believe.” [\[230\]](#) The vow was fulfilled with the most stupendous *public* miracle since the parting of the Red Sea. Symbolizing Christ, the Great Miracle of the Sun (like the Star of Esther on Our Lady’s gown), is a “figure-type,” illustrating once more that “the miracles of Our Lord and the signs accomplished by Our Lady of Fatima are not only extraordinary facts which bear witness to their supernatural origin, they are also symbols rich in meaning, the sensible expressions of mystery.” [\[231\]](#)

Our Lady in the Modern Age

“The intervention of God in human history through the Fatima events was predicted in the Bible and is God's definitive response to the revolt of many nations and peoples away from the revelation and rule of Jesus Christ,” explained Father Joseph de St. Marie who was, at the time, Professor of Theology at the Pontifical Faculty of Saint Theresa in Rome. “The revolt against God is the ‘mystery of iniquity’ of which Saint Paul speaks, saying that it is already in operation.” [\[232\]](#)

Let us then consider the Great Revolt of the “Modern Age,” which began in the 1500’s immediately after the Renaissance era and continues to our times. Of great import to the Church and the faithful, each heinous step of this Revolt occurred two hundred years apart, the last of them coinciding with Our Lady’s appearances at Fatima: the revolt of Luther (1517), the public establishment of Freemasonry (1717), and the birth of Bolshevism

(1917)

Note also how the Great Revolt against the Church, which began in 1517, is comprised of **three distinct parts**—just like its antidote, the Great Secret of Fatima, which opened with a vision of hell because so many souls condemn themselves to eternal perdition. Thus the first step of the Revolt marks the 16th century as “the epoch of humanism and also of the Lutheran drama, of the Protestant revolt. Humanism was a cultural movement admittedly, but it was also a return to paganism under the color of culture. As for Luther, he was at the very beginning of the division of Christian Europe. He was the great divider: ‘*Gott ist im Himmel, du bist auf Erden*’ (‘*God is in His Heaven; you are on earth*’). Between heaven and earth, Luther establishes an impassable abyss. He denies all mediations. In the end Luther, who talks so much about Christ, denies the mediation of Christ's Humanity. *A fortiori*, he denies the mediation of Christ's Mother, His Co-Redemptrix.” [233] Herein lies the essential significance of the 16th Century: “The affirmation of man, of rupture between heaven and earth by the denial of the mediations which unite them: Christ, Mary, and first of all the Church. Such is the beginning of the revolt of modern times against God.” [234]

To this first revolt of the Modern Age, the hierarchy of the Church ultimately responded at the infallible Council of Trent (1570). Still, the evil continued to spread into the 17th century. Heresy insidiously spread throughout Christendom, finally reaching France, “the eldest daughter of the Church,” so-called because it was the first nation to publicly proclaim Catholicism as the state religion. Although condemned as a heresy, Jansenism rippled throughout the country, which explains the French bishops’ resistance to St. Louis de Montfort’s apostolate of *True Devotion to Jesus through Mary*. The Jansenist crisis, however, led to a worse one.

Near the end of the 17th century, Our Lord attempted to save the Church and France by His direct intervention via the Sacred Heart apparitions at Paray-le-Monial, France. Jesus asked for reparation to His Sacred Heart, especially in the form of the Nine First Fridays, and He also sent a special request to the King of France. Above all, as He offered His Divine Mercy, He spoke of the ingratitude of sinners which would soon demand His Justice.

St. Margaret Mary revealed, “Our Lord showed Himself to me covered with wounds, His body all bleeding and His Heart torn with grief; He

seemed overcome with fatigue. I threw myself at His feet, filled with a great fear, and I dared not say a word to Him. He said to me: 'Behold to what I am reduced by My chosen people whom I had called to appease My justice, and they persecute Me in secret. If they do not mend their ways I will punish them severely; I will withdraw the good, and the rest I will devote to My just wrath, which will flame up against them.'" [235]

Not thirty years later, in 1717, Freemasonry was born. A secret society, it bears a special hatred for the Catholic Church, "and its avowed aim to destroy the Church is confirmed in Catholic and Masonic documents alike [236]...Within 50 years, Masonry's well-known battle cry was 'to overcome Throne and Altar'—that is, monarchies and Catholicism." [237]

Still, the patient Lord waited for the members of His Church to repent and offer reparation, but not enough did so. He waited for the king of France to heed Him—but to no avail. "The 18th Century saw a further expansion of rebellion which reached its climax in the French Revolution, the first great act of organized political rebellion against God." [238]

Deeply offended, the Merciful "Heart of Christ somehow withdrew behind the Heart of Mary" for "men had refused to respond, or had given insufficient response, to the appeal" [239] of the Sacred Heart. The passion of France began in July 1789, commencing exactly **100 years to the day** that Our Lord made known to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque a special request: To save France from the enemies of the Church, the Catholic monarch must solemnly consecrate himself and the country to His Sacred Heart, thus publicly proclaiming that France placed her trust in God. [240] For 100 years, the kings ignored the request; the tragic result was the French Revolution. France, "eldest daughter of the Church," succumbed to the Masonic Revolution's savagery and its pernicious attack against altar and throne.

In many ways, the doom of 18th century France prefigures both the Third Secret Vision of Fatima and the reign of apocalyptic anti-Christ. Here will be mentioned the **three** most pertinent parallels:

- **First**, the line of Catholic monarchs who failed to honor the Sacred Heart's consecration request, a rejection which eventually led to the apostasy in France [historically prefiguring the failure of a line of Catholic Stewards of the Catholic City—the Popes—to command the bishops of the world to participate in a solemn, collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary];

• **Second**, the rightful king's imprisonment (before his execution) lasted 3 ½ years (the length of time in which anti-Christ will persecute the faithful);

• **Third**, the cruel deaths of the monarch, his queen, and the little Dauphin, all of which were both preceded and followed by the martyrdoms of those who were faithful to Catholicism and to the kingly office [so like the Third Secret Vision in which “a bishop dressed in white” and others before and after him are killed, most likely as martyrs for Christ and also for their fidelity to the papal office].

The 19th century was a “catastrophe for the Church and for the Faith... God could tolerate no more: He could no longer permit men's crimes to go without chastisement; yet neither could He cease to seek to spare us through pure mercy.” [241] So it was that Our Lord sent His Mother to the world.

Beginning with the Rue-de Bac in Paris (1830), Our Lady also appeared at Blangy (1840), LaSalette (1846), Lourdes (1858), Pontmain (1871), Pellevoisin (1876), and Knock, Ireland (1879). With the exception of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico (1531), the others that followed in Europe and Ireland became the very first Marian apparitions of modern times. With the 1830 series of apparitions to St. Catherine Labouré, Our Lady gave the world the “Medal of the Immaculate Conception” (commonly known as “the Miraculous Medal”), with its inscription, “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” At each of the apparitions, she always showed herself the Mother of Mercy and the Mediatrix of All Graces.

The year of Our Lord 1917 marked the third year in which the world suffered from the first universal war. It should be noted that Our Lady did not again come to earth until that year, when the the third part of the Great Revolt was imminent. The Secrets of Fatima, “in their known contents” as Cardinal Ratzinger phrased it in 1984, allow us to reasonably deduce that the Virgin came to warn the Church that mankind had entered a critical juncture in history—specifically, the “revolt” [literally, “apostasy”] that must come first, as foretold by St. Paul. [242] It is this last Revolt that possesses the ability to lead the entire world into the age of great distress among all nations, thus initiating an even greater, three-fold chastisement, prophesied by St. Luke in his eschatological discourse and by St. John in the *Apocalypse*.

Bolshevism, arising in 1917, completed the “trinity of errors” of the

“Modern Age.” As we have already seen, the first part of the Great Revolt consists of philosophical error (which departs from the Church’s philosophy of scholasticism). From this error sprang the other two—theological ambiguity and political-social secularism. [243] “And let it be noted; at the very moment when, as a consequence of the Bolshevik victory, the '*Red Dragon*' emerged at one extremity of Europe in Leningrad, which then was still Petrograd, at the other extremity of Europe, at Fatima...there appeared the '*Woman Clothed with the Sun*', the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Such was the miracle of October 13, 1917, the Miracle of the Sun, a miracle which calls for an entire book to itself...But, dear friends, this sun is the symbol of Christ.” [244]

The Effects of Divine Mercy

Thrice foretold in the preceding three months, witnessed by 70,000-100,000 people, the astounding Miracle of the Sun marks Fatima as unique amongst all Church-authenticated Marian apparitions. The “Great Sign,” given on October 13, 1917, majestically summarizes the whole Fatima message of God’s Divine Mercy and Justice, which are inseparable.

“Among the effects of Divine Mercy,” said St. John Eudes, “we must enumerate three principal realities, which in turn embody numberless effects. **The first** is the Incarnation of the God-Man; **the second**, his Mystical Body, namely Holy Church; **the third** is the Mother of the God-Man, namely the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. These constitute three admirable masterpieces of Divine Mercy.” [245] Possessing theological and Mariological depths which no one could hope to fully explore, these *three* principal masterpieces nevertheless resonate throughout the Fatima revelations. They are manifested in the Great Secret (in three distinct parts) and the Great Miracle (in three marked phases). Conversely, the Great Revolt’s three parts utterly oppose these holy realities.

During the whole night and morning of Oct. 12-13, 1917, a “thin, persistent rain fell, wetting the fields, muddying the ground, and penetrating with its cold humidity” [246] all those making their way to Fatima. No doubt, Heaven had many reasons for sending this permeating rain, which might be summed up as a chance to offer as a sacrifice for the conversion of sinners that which the Lord allows us to suffer and as a “sensible sign” of the graces God wishes to dispense through the hands of the Immaculate One.

Many people expected the miracle to begin promptly at noon, according

to the clock, not realizing that the Lady appeared at the solar noon hour—that is, according to the sun’s time. In October, the difference between solar time and clock time was that of an hour and a half, which explains why witnesses would later say that the children arrived just before one o’clock (11:30 a.m. by the sun’s time) or that they saw the cloud around 1:30 p.m. (solar noon), which occurs in the following account.

“I am going to relate to you in a brief and concise manner, without any statements which would conceal the truth, what I saw in Fatima on 13 October, 1917,” wrote Dr. Joseph Almeida Garrett, Professor of Natural Sciences at Coimbra University, who penned his witness account in December, 1917. “I arrived at midday. The rain which had fallen persistently all morning, combined with a blustery wind, continued fretfully, as if threatening to drown everyone. The dull and heavy sky, its dark-grey clouds water-laden, predicted abundant rain for a long time to come.”

“I remained on the road in the shelter of the hood of my car, looking rather disdainfully towards the place where they said the apparition would be seen, not daring to step on the sodden and muddy earth of the freshly-ploughed field. I was a little more than a hundred meters [about 330 feet] from the high wooden posts mounted by a rough cross, seeing distinctly the wide circle of people who, with their umbrellas open seemed like a vast arena of mushrooms. A little after one o’clock, the children to whom Our Lady, as they declare, appeared and appointed the place, day and hour of the apparition, arrived at the site. Hymns were intoned and sung by the people who gathered about them. At a certain moment, this immense mass of people, so varied and compact, closed their umbrellas and uncovered their heads in a gesture that could have been one of humility or respect, but which left me surprised and bewildered, because now the rain, with a blind persistency, poured down on their heads and drenched them through. Later, I was told that this crowd, who finished up by kneeling in the mud, had obeyed the voice of a child.” Indeed, it was true that Lucia, in anticipation of the Virgin’s arrival, had asked the people to close their umbrellas.

“It must have been about half-past one when there rose up, on the precise spot where the children were, a pillar of smoke, a delicate, slender, bluish column that went straight up to about two meters, perhaps above their heads and then evaporated. The phenomenon lasted for some seconds and was perfectly visible to the naked eye...It was repeated yet a second and third time. On these three occasions, and especially on the last one, the

slender posts stood out distinctly in the dull grey atmosphere.”

Note that Dr. Joseph Almeida Garrett carefully observed the wondrous pillar of smoke and yet wrote in his account that he had been “looking at the spot of the apparitions, in a serene, if cold, expectation of something happening and with diminishing curiosity because **a long time had passed without anything to excite my attention.**” [\[247\]](#)

One may well consider the professor’s latter words, pondering if the oppressive difficulties of the perseverant faithful—thousands of people exhaustedly making their way through persistent rain and wind that was at first annoying but then chilled them to the bone, spattered and then bogged down with the heavy mud of this earth, mocked by others and yet filled with hope—and who perhaps, like Dr. Garrett, also felt that a “long time had passed without anything to excite [their] attention” are literally indicative of the many spiritual trials the Church Militant shall continually endure until *all* of Our Lady’s requests are finally heeded. For although a long time has indeed passed since the Mother of God made her requests, we know that their accomplishment will immediately result in the fruition of the Virgin’s promise: “In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me and she will be converted and an era of peace will be granted to mankind.”

What the Children Saw on October 13, 1917

The cloud which appeared indicated the Virgin’s arrival and, as usual, Lucia asked the Lady what she wanted. She revealed to the three children who she is and what she wanted: *“I want a chapel to be built here in my honor, for I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue to say the Rosary every day. The war will end soon and the soldiers will return to their homes.”*

Lucia said she had many things to ask of the Lady, “to heal some sick people, and to convert some sinners, etc.”

To this general request, the Virgin gravely responded: *“Some, yes; others, no. People must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins.”*

Growing sadder, she said, *“Do not offend the Lord our God any longer; He is already deeply offended.”* [\[248\]](#)

“Then, opening her hands, Our Lady made them reflect on the sun and, as she ascended, the reflection of her own light continued to be projected on the sun itself.” [\[249\]](#) Here, as with other manifestations at Fatima (like the mysterious pillars of incense arising, three times, from the holmoak tree upon which Our Lady stood [\[250\]](#)), we recognize anew that incredible

Mariophany of which Sr. Lucia would later write, addressing the Virgin as “a living tabernacle, a Monstrance, a living Temple, the permanent abode of the Most Holy Trinity.” [\[251\]](#) Surely those words of Sr. Lucia’s grant a breath-taking glimpse into the “lights about this mystery” (the Holy Trinity) that she later received as a young nun but was not permitted to reveal. [\[252\]](#) (Years later, a cardinal would publicly state, “While the death of God is proclaimed with arrogant glee, Fatima appears to be a supernatural light. It is God who reveals Himself with the impressive majesty of Sinai,” as the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon said at the 8th Fatima Congress at Kvelaer, Germany, on September 18, 1977.) [\[253\]](#)

Lucia continued, “After Our Lady had disappeared into the immense distance of the firmament, we beheld St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world, for they traced the Sign of the Cross with their hands.”

“When, a little later, this apparition disappeared, I saw Our Lord and Our Lady; it seemed to me that it was Our Lady of Sorrows. Our Lord appeared to bless the world in the same manner as St. Joseph had done.”

“This apparition also vanished, and I saw Our Lady once more, this time resembling Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.” [\[254\]](#)

At the precise moment Our Lady cast her own light upon the sun, the drenching rain suddenly stopped, the brooding clouds dispersed, and the sky became clearer. The sudden change immediately attracted attention of the great crowd of thousands.

What the People Saw

Many witnesses, both poor and rich, uneducated or cultured, believers or scoffers, testified to what happened next. First among them is the faithful Ti Marto, the father of Blessed Jacinta and Blessed Francisco: “We looked easily at the sun, which did not blind us. It seemed to flicker on and off, first one way and then another. It shot rays in different directions and painted everything in different colors...What was most extraordinary is that the sun did not hurt our eyes at all. Everything was still and quiet; everyone was looking upwards...” [\[255\]](#)

O Dia, the Lisbon newspaper, described the Miracle in this way: “At midday by the sun, the rain stopped. The sky, pearly grey in color, illuminated the vast arid landscape with a strange light. The sun had a transparent gauzy veil so that the eye could easily be fixed on it. The grey

mother-of-pearl tone turned into a sheet of silver which broke up as the clouds were parted and the silver sun, enveloped in the same gauzy grey light, was seen to whirl and turn in the circle of broken clouds. A cry went up from every mouth and people fell on their knees in the muddy ground... The light turned a beautiful blue as though through the window of a cathedral. The blue faded slowly and then the light seemed to pass through yellow glass. Yellow stain fell on white handkerchiefs against the dark skirts of the women. The colors were repeated on the stones and the serra.” [256]

Perhaps most astonishing is the report published in *O Seculo*, the anti-Catholic, Masonic daily paper of Lisbon, Portugal, written by none other than the paper’s Editor-in-Chief, Avelino de Almedia. We must give credit to this man who, despite his leanings, honestly reported what he witnessed regardless of the heckling and derision that he knew he would receive from his employers and fellow journalists:

“...one could see the immense multitude turn toward the sun, which appeared at its zenith, coming out of the clouds.”

“It resembles a dull silver disc, and it is possible to fix one’s eyes on it without the least damage to the eye. It does not burn the eyes. It does not blind them. One might say that an eclipse was taking place.”

“An immense clamor bursts out, and those who are nearer to the crowd hear a shout: ‘Miracle! Miracle!’ Prodigy!...Prodigy!”

“The attitude of the people takes us back to biblical times. Stupefied and with heads uncovered, they watch the blue sky. Before their dazzled eyes the sun trembled, the sun made unusual and brusque movements, defying all the laws of the cosmos, and according to the typical expression of the peasants, ‘*the sun danced...*’”

Fifteen days later, after receiving the expected mocking, Almedia enumerated previously omitted details: “What did I see at Fatima that was even stranger? The rain, at an hour announced in advance, ceased falling; the thick mass of clouds dissolved; and the sun—a dull, silver disc—came into view at its zenith, and began to dance in a violent and convulsive movement, which a great number of witnesses compared to a serpentine dance, because the colors taken on by the surface of the sun were so beautiful and gleaming.” [257]

Dr. Garrett also described “a disc, with a clear cut rim, luminous and shining, but which did not hurt the eyes. I do not agree with the comparison which I have heard made in Fatima—that of a dull silver disc. It was a

clearer, richer, brighter color, having something of the lustre of a pearl. It did not in the least resemble the moon on a clear night because one saw it and *felt it to be a living body*...It looked like a glazed wheel made of mother-of-pearl.” [\[258\]](#)

“A Wheel of Fire”

As witnesses testified, the “dance of the sun” was repeated *three* times, with many likening its movements to a “a wheel of fire, “a bicycle wheel,” a “captive ball of fire,” etc. For ten to twelve minutes, the people stood transfixed in wonder, before their amazement turned to terror as the sun suddenly crashed toward the earth:

- “As if from a bolt from the blue, the clouds were wrenched apart, and the sun at its zenith appeared in all its splendor. It began to revolve vertiginously on its axis, like the most magnificent *firewheel* that could be imagined, taking on all the colors of the rainbow and sending forth multi-coloured flashes of light, producing the most astounding affect. This sublime and incomparable spectacle, which was repeated three distinct times, lasted for about ten minutes. The immense multitude, overcome by the evidence of such a prodigy, threw themselves on their knees. The Creed, the Hail Mary, Acts of Contrition burst from all lips, and tears, tears of thanksgiving and repentance sprang from their eyes.” (Dr. Formigão, professor of the seminary at Santarem.) [\[259\]](#)

- “It seemed like a *wheel of fire* which was going to fall on the people.” (Maria Carreira)

- “...it spun like a *firewheel*.” (Maria do Carmo Marques da Cruz Menezes)

- “...it spun round upon itself in a *mad whirl*.” (Dr. Almeida Garrett)

- “It came down as if to the height of the clouds and began to whirl giddily upon itself like a *captive ball of fire*.” (Fr. Pereira da Silva)

- “I saw the sun spinning round and it seemed about to come down on us. It revolved like a *bicycle wheel*. Afterward, it returned to its place...I wasn’t afraid, but I heard people cry out: ‘Oh we’re going to die! We are going to die!’” (John Carreira, the crippled son of Maria Carreira, and later sacristan of the Fatima shrine) [\[260\]](#)

- “I saw the sun, as if it were a *ball of fire*, begin to move in the clouds. It had been raining all morning and the sky was full of clouds, but the rain stopped. It lasted for several seconds, crushingly pressing down on us. Wan faces, standing here, from every side great ejaculations, acts of contrition, of

the love of God. An indescribable moment! We feel it. We remain dominated by it. But it is not possible to describe it.” (Carlos Mendes, a lawyer) [\[261\]](#)

- “At a certain moment, the sun seemed to stop and then began to move and dance.” (Ti Marto, father of Francisco and Jacinta Marto)

- “However, the sun stops, only to begin the strange dance again after a brief interruption, whirling upon itself, giving the impression of approaching or receding.” (Dr. Pereira Gens of Batalha) [\[262\]](#)

- “Then suddenly, one heard a clamor, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth, as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight. **The sensation during those moments was terrible.**” (Dr. Almeida Garrett) [\[263\]](#)

- “At a certain moment, the sun seemed to stop and then began to move and dance until it seemed that *it was being detached from the sky and was falling on us. It was a terrible moment.*” (Ti Marto) [\[264\]](#)

- “It suddenly seemed to come down in a zig-zag, menacing the earth. **Terrified**, I ran and hid myself among the people, who were weeping and expecting the end of the world to come at any moment.” (Fr. Lourenco, who witnessed the Miracle as a schoolboy.) [\[265\]](#)

- “I looked at the sun and saw it spinning like a disc, rolling on itself. I saw people changing color. They were stained with colors of the rainbow. The sun seemed to be falling from the sky...The people said that the world was going to end...They were afraid and screaming.” (Antonio de Oliveira, farmer) [\[266\]](#)

- “I saw the sun turn upon itself; it seemed to fall from the sky...The people around me were crying that the world was going to end.” (Maria dos Prazeres, widow) [\[267\]](#)

- “The sun started to roll from one place to another and changed to blue, yellow—all colors. Then we saw the sun coming towards the children. Everyone was crying out. Some started to confess their sins because there was no priest around here...My mother grabbed me to her and started to cry, ‘It is the end of the world!’ And then we see the sun come right into the trees...” (Dominic Reis, in a 1960 television interview) [\[268\]](#)

- “Suddenly the rain stopped and a great splendor appeared and the children cried, ‘Look at the sun!’ I saw the sun coming down, feeling that it was falling to the ground. At that moment, I collapsed.” (Maria Candida da

Silva) [269]

- “I looked and saw that the people were in various colors—yellow, white, blue. At the same time, I beheld the sun spinning at great speed and very near to me. I at once thought: I am going to die.” (Rev. Joao Menitra) [270]

- “The sun at its zenith whirled upon itself; it detached itself in descending towards the right, all the while whirling with sudden movements never seen before, to the right and the left; having almost arrived at the horizon line, it went back up to the zenith on the left, *tracing a sort of winding ellipse as it went.*” (Baron de Alvaiazere) [271]

The frightened people, watching the sun return to its place in the heavens, had not yet noticed that their drenched and mud-soaked clothing was now clean and dry. Certainly, one can ponder even this prodigy, which reminds us of God’s abiding Providence. So many pilgrims had for days traveled to Fatima, and then faced a downpour that led them through mud up to two feet deep. Their shoes and lower apparel were caked with mud, their hair and clothes soaked, their bodies thoroughly chilled—and then within the ten to twelve minutes during the Miracle of the Sun, they were spotless, warm, dry, restored. This wonder, however, was not what moved them to instinctively raise their voices in an ecstasy of exultation.

“What could be more overwhelming in impact than the sun plunging like fire from Heaven while tens of thousands lay writhing in the mud, screaming for mercy, convinced that the end of the world had arrived?” asked Francis Johnston, a Catholic writer on Marian apparitions. “At Fatima, we have 100,000 eyewitnesses of all faiths and none, united in their conviction that this indeed was the end of the world. And afterwards, when they found themselves alive and safe, but quivering with fear, they were seized by the realization that God had stamped His Mother’s words with a colossal preview of His Second Coming. Why then should we not ponder their unanimous testimony and take seriously to heart the crucial message which the solar Miracle so heavily underscored?” [272]

“We have seen the Sign of God!” the crowd cried in joy and thanksgiving, “spontaneously using the most exact biblical term, which also evokes the mysterious prophecy of the *Apocalypse*...*A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun...*(Apoc.12:1)” [273]

Virgin of Fatima and the *Apocalypse*: The Great Sign in Heaven

The apocalyptic verse above continues "...and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered. *And there was seen another sign in heaven:* and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns: and on his head seven diadems: And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered; that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her son. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod: and her son was taken up to God, and to his throne." [274]

"Before the eyes of the Seer [St. John], a great sign, the first of the 'signs,' a portent of something momentous, appears *in the Church*. It is a sign of divine origin," explains Rev. Herman Bernard Kramer in *The Book of Destiny*. [275] Previously, it was explained that, in apocalyptic symbolism, the word "heaven" (in the singular sense) means "the Church," which is the kingdom of God on earth. [276] It follows that the great sign of "a woman clothed with the sun" appears *in the Church*.

It shall also be repeated that, throughout salvation history, the signs of God indicate various purposes. **A true sign** can possess any one or more of the following seven functions: It confirms God's Word, His goodness, authenticates prophesy, verifies God's blessings and His intervention for the sake of the elect, strengthens the faithful with hope, insures or testifies to God's Presence, or declares His judgment upon sin.

"Signs in prophetic terminology are ominous revelations of what is about to happen," as Rev. Kramer wrote in his commentary on *Apocalypse*, Chapter 12. "Therefore the apostles asked Our Lord for the 'sign' of His coming. [277] The Pharisees demanded 'a sign from Heaven' as a proof of Our Lord's claim to divinity." [278] In the sense intended by the Pharisees, a sign is a miracle from Heaven. [279] However, Rev. Kramer adds a sobering insight: "The word furthermore denotes the wonders wrought by evil powers." [280]

In considering Rev. Kramer's phrasing, along with the seven purposes of signs as they are given in the Scriptures, [281] three things are understood, as follows: **1)** signs, in and of themselves, are either good or evil, the good coming from God but the evil only permitted by God, **2)** signs are "ominous," a word which can mean "portentous, significant, promising, ill-omened, threatening, or boding evil," and **3)** the actual appearance of the

sign reveals “what is about to happen.”

Rev. Kramer continued, “In the Septuagint, the word is used for *celestial phenomena*. [282] The sign [of “a woman clothed with the sun”] appearing here is GREAT, because it will indicate the time of the judgment that shall proclaim the ‘Great Day’ of Almighty God. *It will herald the near approach of the events narrated in chapters eleven and thirteen*. Appearing in heaven, it will point to the center of the whole desperate struggle for the possession of the world by Satan and his hordes. **When this sign appears in the Church, the advent of Antichrist is near...The interpretation of this ‘sign’ is thus very important.**” [283]

Since the *Apocalypse* is not necessarily written as a chronology—that is, as an exact order of events—Fr. Kramer’s view that the great sign of *Apocalypse* Chapter 12:1 **precedes** those matters recorded in Chapters 11 and 13 leads us to note that Chapter 11 foretells the measuring of the temple and the appearances of the two witnesses, commonly believed to be Enoch and Elias. Chapter 13 prophesies the beast with the seven heads and ten horns, coming out of the sea, as well as the second beast, “coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns, like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon.” A horn (or horns) are the biblical symbol for either a man or an object consecrated to God; they are also the sign of what the Bible calls “kings” who possess spiritual and/or earthly authority over a nation or nations. (For example, see Exod. 27:2; Lev. 4:7; Ps. 74:11; Daniel 7:24, Dan. 8:20, Amos 6: 14, Zach. 1:21, but there are many others.) Kings may be good or evil, as the Bible has often shown.

Our resurrected Lord in Heaven is described by St. John in *Apocalypse* 5:6 in the following manner: “And I saw: and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing as it were slain, having seven horns and seven eyes: which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.” The descriptive number of seven indicates God’s spiritual perfection, because He is God, the King of kings.

In a word, horns are Scriptural emblems of power, authority, dominion, glory, intensity, or ferocity. The “two horns, like a lamb” are very telling; they infallibly predict a living man who holds a high office of authority, who poses as a lamb (a Christian) but who speaks as “a dragon,” meaning his doctrines are those of hell. That said, it seems apparent that this man will be either one of two things: an ordained bishop or a cardinal (both wear

“two-horned” mitres which denote spiritual authority) **or** he might be the leader of a nation (a lay person) who holds a position of great authority in the world and who presents himself to the world as a Christian leader. St. John relates in his Gospel (Jn. 21: 15-17) that Our resurrected Lord, when speaking to St. Peter, twice told the Prince of the Apostles, “Feed my lambs,” Christ’s reference to the laity, and then “Feed my sheep,” Jesus’ reference to the other apostles, the hierarchy. Whoever will be this “lamb” with authority, he will speak “as a dragon” because he is a liar and a traitor to the Lord.

A Royal Woman, Clothed with the Sun

Whom or what is represented by “a woman clothed with the sun”? That the woman is royal is evident—she is clothed with the sun, she wears a crown of twelve stars, and she stands upon the moon. As we already know, there is found within the Church two main interpretations: one claims that she is the Virgin Mary and another believes that she personifies the Church. We shall see that she is both.

For example, Pope St. Pius X declared to the bishops of the Church, “Everyone knows that this woman signified the Virgin Mary, the stainless one who brought forth our Head. The Apostle continues: ‘*And, being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered.*’ (Apoc.12: 2). John therefore saw the Most Holy Mother of God already in eternal happiness, yet travailing in a mysterious childbirth. What birth was it? Surely it was the birth of us who, still in exile, are yet to be generated to the perfect charity of God, and to eternal happiness. And the birth pains show the love and desire with which the Virgin from heaven above watches over us, and strives with unwearying prayer to bring about the fulfillment of the number of the elect.” [\[284\]](#)

In defining the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Pope Pius XII pronounced: “Moreover, the scholastic Doctors have recognized the Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God as something signified, not only in various figures of the Old Testament, but also in that *woman clothed with the sun* whom John the Apostle contemplated on the Island of Patmos.” [\[285\]](#)

In the *Douay-Rheims Bible*, an accompanying footnote for the *Apocalypse*, Chapter 12:1, summarizes another interpretation, one that favors “a woman” as a symbolic image of the Church: “‘A woman’...The church of God. It may also, by allusion, be applied to Our Blessed Lady.

The church is clothed with the sun, that is, with Christ: she hath the moon, that is, the changeable things of the world, under her feet: and the twelve stars with which she is crowned, are the twelve apostles: she is in labour and pain, whilst she brings forth her children, and Christ in them, in the midst of afflictions and persecutions.”

Since the Blessed Virgin Mary painlessly brought forth only one Child, [286] Who is the Christ, the Lord and Savior of the world, it seems reasonable that “ancient interpreters beginning with Hippolytus and Methodius understood this [‘a woman clothed with the sun’ who is in pain to be delivered] to be a figure of the Church.” [287]

However, if the woman represents the Church and *only* the Church, the latter interpretation raises a necessary question, as follows:

Why would St. John describe, in symbolic language, the Church (“a woman clothed with the sun”) as appearing *in the Church* (“in heaven”)? In other words, why would the Church appear as a “great sign” within herself?

The Great Sign at Enmity with the Dragon

Likewise considering that the whole of Scripture contains figure-types [288] of New Testament archetypes (such as Christ, Our Lady, or the just versus the reprobates), is it not possible that this “great sign” foretells the age in which Mary (assumed into Heaven), appears in the Church?

It is already known that the Virgin Mary is herself a sign from God. In the Old Testament, the infallible Scriptures reveal: “Therefore, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and His name shall be called Emmanuel.” [289]

The Virgin Mother is also “Woman,” the title by which Jesus Christ called His Virgin Mother. [290] He called her “Woman” at Cana, and He immediately performed His first miracle at her request. As He was dying on the Cross, He again called her “Woman,” saying, “Woman, behold thy son.” Then speaking to John, He said simply, “Behold thy mother.” Our Lord’s last directive from the Cross entrusted the Virgin Mary to St. John as *Mother*, for St. John in his person represented the faithful of the Church. (Additionally, might we momentarily consider that St. John was the only one of the Apostles to stand with the Virgin at the Foot of the Cross, the only Apostle privileged to care for Christ’s Mother, and the only Apostle who beheld the great visions which he was instructed by Heaven to write, a record which became known as the *Apocalypse*?)

By calling His Mother “Woman,” another mystery of grace is revealed:

The Word Incarnate [291] revealed by His Word that His Mother, the Virgin Mary, is “the Woman” foretold in the *proto-evangelium* (the first Good News) of *Genesis 3:15*. God Himself pronounced to the serpent (the devil) that HE (the Lord) would place enmities (i.e., hostilities, antagonisms, animosities) between the evil one and “the woman.” God made clear His Holy Will that the “the woman” is the one who crushes the head of the serpent and all his plots: “*I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.*” [292]

Illustrating that the Church’s Tradition has long recognized the Virgin Mary as the Woman of *Genesis*, Blessed Pope Pius IX quoted the first eight words of *Genesis 3:15*, when defining the Immaculate Conception. [293] More than a century before that solemn definition, St. Louis de Montfort (the great saint who so well taught true devotion to Jesus through Mary), fully grasped the true meaning of “the woman” prophesied in the *proto-evangelium* of *Genesis 3:15*, writing:

“God has established only one enmity—but it is an irreconcilable one, which will last and *even go on increasing to the end of time*. That enmity is between Mary, His worthy Mother, and the devil, between the children and the servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and followers of Lucifer.”

“Thus the most fearful enemy that God has set up against the devil is Mary, His holy Mother. From the time of the earthly paradise, although she existed then only in His mind, He gave her such a hatred for His accursed enemy, such ingenuity in exposing the wickedness of the ancient serpent and such power to defeat, overthrow and crush this proud rebel, that Satan fears her not only more than angels and men but in a certain sense more than God Himself. This does not mean that the anger, hatred and power of God are not infinitely greater than the Blessed Virgin’s, since her attributes are limited. It simply means that Satan, being so proud, suffers infinitely more in being vanquished and punished by a lowly and humble servant of God, for her humility humiliates him more than the power of God.” [294]

The Woman and the Church

Our Lady, as “the woman,” is God’s chosen one who shall crush the serpent’s head, which means she is victorious over the very same entity typified as the red dragon of the *Apocalypse*. As “the woman,” the Virgin Mary is the Immaculate and living archetype of the authoritative, infallible,

and indefectible Church. [295] As the Mother of God the Son and Spouse of the Holy Ghost, she is also the Mother of the Church.

The Church, as “a woman clothed with the sun,” is the Spotless Bride of Christ. As such, the eternal Church is given unique attributes. She herself is sinless, but her impeccability is slandered by the sins of those who profess to be her children and by those who boldly hate her. Like the Virgin Mary, the eternal Church is sinned against by those whom she would save, her name and all of her divinely-given prerogatives trampled and blasphemed, and she, too, is in constant battle with the dragon.

The Woman who appeared at Fatima was described by Sr. Lucia, eldest of the three shepherd children, as “a Lady all dressed in white. She was more brilliant than the sun, and radiated a light more clear and intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water, when the rays of the burning sun shine through it.” [296] Lucia’s account of the Beautiful Lady who “appeared in heaven” (the Church) is very close to that of “a woman clothed with the sun.”

“And let it be noted, at the very moment when, as a consequence of the Bolshevik victory, the ‘Red Dragon’ emerged at one extremity of Europe in Leningrad, which then was still Petrograd, at the other extremity of Europe, at Fatima...there appeared the ‘Woman Clothed with the Sun’, the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” as we have already seen explained by Fr. Joseph de St. Marie, Professor of Theology at the Pontifical Faculty of Saint Theresa in Rome. [297]

Just as the *Apocalypse* foretold, in 1917 it was the Woman who *first* appeared as “a great sign” in the Church. “And there was seen another sign in heaven—and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns: and on his head seven diadems.” This sign is not “a great sign” like the Woman clothed with the sun, but it is *another* sign, one that is in stark contrast against the woman, an ominous sign that appears *in the Church*. This infallible warning appears to indicate that Satan will both persecute and infiltrate the Church, just as he persecuted the first twelve apostles; he also infiltrated them by drawing Judas further into his own weak inclinations and Judas, as we know, unwittingly betrayed Christ and then died by his own hand.

This terrible sign of “a great red dragon” with seven heads, ten horns (leaders of nations), and seven diadems reminds us that Our Lady said Russia will spread her errors (plural) throughout the world. The great red

dragon is the spirit of anti-Christ already risen, the spirit behind the heresy of universal salvation which redefines the word *catholic* (i.e., universal) as it applies to the true Church, the spirit behind the creation of a universal world-government that seeks to totally abolish the Social Reign of Christ the King, and the spirit behind a “new order” which inverses the order of God’s Church and God’s world. It is the spirit paving the way for the actual person of anti-Christ. To counter that evil spirit, the Fatima Virgin asked specific requests of the entire Church, one being that the Pope and the hierarchy make an act of solemn, collegial consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

Only at Fatima did the Lord, through the Virgin Mary, perform a *public* miracle so great that those who saw it called it “the sign of God.” [298] The child Lucia had asked Our Lady for a sign, not for herself but for the scoffing unbelievers, like those who challenged Our Lord, “What **sign** therefore dost thou shew, **that we may see, and may believe thee?** What dost thou work?” [299]

To see and to believe—the faithful believe without seeing, but unbelievers always demand a sign. For the sake of the Message and the Great Secret, which are given for the conversion of sinners, Our Lady of Fatima assured Lucia and her two younger cousins, “In October, ***I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe.***” [300]

On October 13, 1917, the Woman who is more brilliant than the sun kept her promise with the Miracle of the Sun. Witnessed by at least 70,000 people, the “great sign” was seen in the heavens, recalling Rev. Kramer’s observation: “**In the Septuagint, the word [sign] is used for *celestial phenomena.***” [301]

Thus, it seems there does exist a dual-symbolism in *Apocalypse*, Ch. 12:1, in which the Virgin Mary not only appears as “a great sign” in the Church, in order to assist the Church as her prophesied travail approaches—but she, through the power of God, also gave “a great sign” to those who live in these very troubled times.

The Message and the Miracle: A Private Revelation?

The Miracle of the Sun is “the great eschatological sign, the answer of God to the errors of the present time,” said Bishop Rudolf Graber of Regensburg. Pope Paul VI said of the falling sun at Fatima, “It was

eschatological in the sense that it was like a repetition or an *annunciation of a scene at the end of time for all humanity assembled together.*" [302]

Eschatology is the study of the end of days, which is also called the day of judgment, the latter days, the great and terrible day, the last days of the world. Therefore, in reflecting that the Miracle is "the great eschatological sign," it is necessary to keep in mind that the Great Secret of Fatima (in three parts) and the Great Miracle (in three phases) are Heaven's responses to the ongoing Great Revolt (in three stages), which rebels against God and His one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church. It is also important to recall the revelations of the Sacred Heart at Paray-le-Monial, stressing the necessity of mankind's repentance and reparation for sin, and the Lord's desire to grant us Divine Mercy rather than chastisement. Finally, one cannot forget Our Lady's many intercessions since the year 1830 to save souls.

It is likewise reasonable and prudent to reflect and assent to the truth that Fatima (in its signs witnessed for five successive months, in its entire message, its Great Secret and Great Miracle) is not a mere "private revelation" which can be airily dismissed with the alleged excuse that Catholics need only adhere to Divine Revelation (Tradition and Scripture), otherwise known as the Deposit of Faith. Such a claim is not reasonable because it actually *contradicts* Divine Revelation.

No Pope has ever insisted that Fatima is a private revelation but rather, as this book's first chapter noted, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of Fatima's "prophetic mission" and Pope John Paul II said, "Fatima places an obligation on the Church." [303] Before them, Pope Pius XII had said that the time for doubting Fatima was past, and that it was time to take action. Again, Popes do not say such things of "private revelations." The Scriptures themselves proclaim: "Extinguish not the spirit. Despise not prophecies. But prove all things; hold fast to that which is good." (1 Thess. 5:19-20)

"Frequently, objections are made to Fatima as being a sort of magic word in theology," said Bishop Rudolf Graber on September 23, 1973 in his address to the Fatima Congress at Freiburg, Germany. "Fatima, they say, is after all only a private revelation and is therefore not binding in conscience, except for the person to whom it was given. [People claim] we only accept the great revelation of God [i.e., Divine Revelation of Tradition and Scripture] which ended definitively with Christ and the Apostles. Why then such an outcry against Fatima?

“It is to be noted that this objection comes principally from those who neither respect the great revelation of God, nor of Christ, and who even want to eliminate some fundamental truths of Faith, such as the virgin birth of Jesus, His Resurrection, His miracles, and even His very Divinity...It is absolutely certain that revelation as such was completed with Christ and His Apostles. **What happens then if these private revelations confirm and emphasize certain truths that are found in this great revelation?**

“This is exactly what happens with Fatima. Fatima confirms the existence of angels and demons that Modernists try to eliminate. Fatima confirms the mystery of the Eucharist which Modernists have stripped of all meaning. Fatima confirms the existence of Hell, which is simply denied today. Fatima requires prayer and sacrifice, values to which people today feel themselves far superior and from which they consequently dispense themselves. Nevertheless, all through the Old and New Testament, this penance is spoken of...Today, much is spoken about fraternity, which naturally is not understood so much on a supernatural level, but almost exclusively in the social field and in technical developments.

“Once again, we affirm that revelation proper ended with Christ and His Apostles. **But does that mean that God has to remain silent, that He can no longer speak to His elect? Does it mean, as some believers think, that He should remain apart and leave the world abandoned to itself?** Would not this be a very strange kind of God indeed! Did He not expressly say through His prophet that He would ‘pour forth of His Spirit on all flesh, that sons and daughters would prophesy, that old men would have visions in dreams? Even upon servants and handmaids, He would pour forth His spirit.’ (Acts 2:17; John 3:1-5) Is such a prophecy to be limited only to the first Pentecost? Certainly not. Wherefore hear the word of the Prophet Amos: ‘The trumpet sounds in the street, men do well to be afraid; if peril is afoot in the city, doubt not it is of the Lord’s sending. Never does he act, but His servants, the prophets, are **in the secret.**’ (Amos 3:6) Should we not thank God with our whole heart, Who even today speaks to us, especially when any danger is approaching?

“At an opportune moment,” the bishop continued, “an eminent theologian called attention to the fact that we ought to distinguish exactly between private revelations which are given only to a privileged person, and others that contain a message for the Church or even for the whole world. We need not preoccupy ourselves with the first kind, but we should take

serious account of the latter, since to reject them or not to be interested in them would mean a reprehensible despising of the Word of God, and a grave lack of responsibility towards the world. For these the word of the prophet holds good: ‘But what if the sentry, when he sees the invader coming, sounds no alarm to his neighbor to warn his neighbor? Here is some citizen overtaken by the enemy; well, his guilt deserved it. But for his death, I will hold the sentry accountable.’ (Ezekiel 33:6)”

It was then that Bishop Graber said that Miracle of Fatima represents “the great eschatological sign, the answer of God to the errors of the present time. The world finds itself on the eve of tremendous happenings breaking forth from the East. Hell seems to be let loose. The maternal Heart of Mary offers to save the world...May this depreciatory allegation that ‘these are only private revelations’ not become the norm for dismissing the subject. Naturally, Mary’s words at Lourdes and Fatima are not on the same level as the general (Divine) revelation...But this does not mean that God and Mary are prohibited from speaking again. God speaks once more today and in a manner all the more intelligible **as His Second Coming draws nearer, and this is precisely what Fatima seems to indicate.**” [\[304\]](#)

Another theologian, Fr. G. Van Noort, wrote in his book *Dogmatic Theology* (Vol. 3, p. 215): “Such a revelation ought to be believed by both the one who receives it and by those for whom it is destined. The rest of the faithful cannot outrightly deny it without some sort of sin.” (This, of course, is after the local bishop has investigated the event and only if he has judged it to be “worthy of belief.”) [\[305\]](#)

“There are other things besides the solemn teaching authority of the Church that bind a person to accept something,” declared Fr. William A. Hinnebusch, O.P. of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., in a letter published by the *Northern American Voice of Fatima* (November 10, 1963). “A creature endowed with reason is obliged by his own intelligence to bow to evidence when it is present. To resist evidence is obstinately anti-intellectual. Furthermore, when reliable witnesses testify to an event or fact which seems incontrovertible, a reasonable man must give assent. To say he may refuse assent without blame is a questionable position. When a person of such outstanding authority as the late Pope Pius XII says ‘the time for doubting Fatima is past; it is now time for action,’ then reasonable men must stop and question whether good evidence offered by reliable witnesses is behind the conviction. For a Catholic to deliberately

close his mind to such a statement can hardly be without blame...a reasonable man accepts the evidence of reliable witnesses. When he refuses to do so, he does violence to his own reason.” [\[306\]](#)

“As a professional philosopher, what I find most remarkable in the event of Fatima is that it is a heavenly intervention in the history of mankind in order to redirect history,” wrote Abbé André Richard, D.D., of Paris in *Soul* magazine’s January-February 1979 issue. “Fatima is...an intervention to change the march of the entire caravan of mankind, which is on the road to a precipice over which it would inevitably fall unless its route is changed. Fatima concerns not only the pious Christian, but the man in the street –every man in the world. And as a theologian, what impresses me about Fatima is its reaffirmation of the entire *Gospel* and its emphasis on the source of moral evil: offenses against God which today mount even to the ultimate offense of militant atheism...How can any of us fail to be conscious of Our Lady appearing in the sky, reminding us of the great sign in chapters 11 and 12 of the *Apocalypse*? How can any of us consider Fatima to be less than the presentation of that apocalyptic message of Our Lady, dressed with the sun and announcing her triumph over Satan?”

Commenting on the Fatima miracle and the *Apocalypse*, Fr. Louis Kondor, S.V.D, the vice-postulator for the causes of canonization for Francisco and Jacinta (who are now Blessed) and editor of the book, *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words*, wrote in his regular bulletin, *Seers of Fatima* (July-August 1975), “In view of this similarity, which seems a telling fulfillment of *Apocalypse* 12, who would venture any longer to speak of a private revelation? Fatima is...an eschatological sign that reveals the saving victory of the 12th chapter of the *Apocalypse*.” Later in the same bulletin, he also stated that “we can consider Fatima as the *great eschatological sign* given by God to our times, so that we will not deserve the rebuke that Our Lord made to the Jews: ‘You know how to read the face of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of the times.’ (Matt. 16:4) Fatima is a sign of the times. The lightning flash that preceded each of Mary’s apparitions at Fatima is an announcement of the lightning that will flash from east to west before the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt. 24:27) And the remaining atmospheric phenomena which belong to the complexity of Fatima are a presage of those signs in the sun, in the moon and the stars that Our Lord speaks of in His eschatological discourse. (Luke 21:25) Fatima is a great sign of the times.”

Finally, the dogmatic Vatican I council affirmed that “in order that the ‘obedience’ of our faith should be ‘consonant with reason’ [cf. Rom. 12:1], God has willed that to the internal aids of the Holy Spirit there should be joined external proofs of His revelation, namely: **divine facts, especially miracles and prophecies** which, because they clearly show forth the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, **are most certain signs of a divine revelation**, and are suited to the intelligence of all.” This same council also condemned those who insist “that divine revelation cannot be made credible by external signs” and “that miracles are not possible, and hence all accounts of them...are to be banished among the fables and myths; or, that miracles can never be known with certitude.” [\[307\]](#)

The signs and secrets of Fatima are one, integral whole and cannot be separated. Fatima was proven by the Church to be worthy of belief, and so its “miracles and prophecies...are most certain signs of a divine revelation.” As we have also seen in this section, certain men within the Church hierarchy referred to the Great Miracle of the Sun as a “sign of the times” and an “eschatological sign,” thus opposing liberal “theologians” who have, for decades, tried in diverse ways to trivialize or dismiss the whole of the Fatima Message and the Miracle. The Miracle was the clear, wondrous, and then terrifying sign given by God so that all would believe and heed the Virgin’s messages; therefore, it is directly connected to the Great Secret in its three distinct parts. To further explore these matters, however, we must also examine a sign seen only by the children—the Star of Esther on the Virgin’s floor-length tunic.

PART 10

Hidden Revelations: The Star of Esther & the Secrets of Fatima

“In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph.”
–*Our Lady of Fatima, July 13, 1917*

It is said that the best place to hide something is in plain sight.

When Sr. Lucia, the last Fatima visionary, was called into eternity on February 13, 2005, both the Catholic and mainstream media sought the significance of the date. Most sources tied-in to May 13, noting the “13” in the anniversary date of the Fatima apparitions (1917), the papal assassination attempt (1981), and John Paul II’s world consecrations and entrustments to the Immaculate Heart (1982, 1984, and 2000). Ultimately, the mainstream efforts implied that Sr. Lucia’s death was a sign that Fatima is finished. Yet when an incredible Scriptural connection to February 13th and Fatima is examined as a whole, the opposite conclusion is made: While the date of Lucia’s death is definitely a sign, it is one alerting the world that we have reached the most critical chapter of the Fatima revelations.

Heretofore, it was never noticed that the date of Sr. Lucia’s passing links to a small yellow star, worn by Our Lady of Fatima. This star is a profound symbol long recognized by tradition as the “Star of Esther.” It points to an Old Testament history called *The Book of Esther*, which relates the story of a Jewish queen whose intercession saved her people from annihilation. Queen Esther’s mediation allowed the ancient Hebrews “to gather themselves together, and to stand for their lives” on “the 13th day of Adar.”

Until Lucia’s passing, the magnitude of “the 13th of Adar” could not be realized, even by Fatima scholars. Her death signals that, like the Jews who stood for their lives on the 13th of Adar, our own great battle against annihilation is begun. The secret significance of Lucia’s date of death has been right before our eyes all the time: It occurred exactly 40 minutes before **sunset**, [\[308\]](#) on the 13th of **February** [\[309\]](#) of the Gregorian calendar—but in the Hebrew month of **Adar**. [\[310\]](#)

P.S. to the Message of Fatima

Thus it seems that even Lucia’s death accentuated the entire Fatima message, manifesting a kind of heavenly post-script: “Hear, O foolish people,

and without understanding: who have eyes, and see not: and ears, and hear not.” [\[311\]](#)

In the Scriptures, the 13th day of Adar is one with historical portent. First, it marks the battle throughout the Persian Empire during the reign of Esther (Esther 9:1); second, it was the date of the Machabees’ liberation of the Holy Land after a four-year combat (1 Mach. 7:3), and third, it is the eve of the anniversary of the infant Moses’ circumcision (through whom God would give His law and whom the Jews have always revered; because he freed his people from centuries of bondage, Moses is a figure-type of Christ). [\[312\]](#)

The theme becomes obvious: An epic battle of God’s *ecclesia* against her enemies.

Because there are no insignificancies in God’s designs, there are great reasons for the Star of Esther adorning Our Lady of Fatima. On February 13, 2005, its purpose was again emphasized when God willed that Lucia should leave this world on a date directing our attention to both Esther and Our Lady of Fatima.

Figure Types:

Of Mary, There is Never Enough

Just as the star adorning Our Lady of Fatima points to *The Book of Esther*, so does *The Book of Esther* point to all of the Fatima revelations. Esther’s theme centers on secrets and revelations, suggesting that *The Book of Esther* is a figure-type for the *Apocalypse* (Greek for Revelations).

The Book of Esther appears to encapsulate what Fatima highlights about both the Virgin’s and the Church’s singular office in salvation history. Esther’s Star on Our Lady’s gown directs the Church to “the history of Queen Esther, who was herself a great [figure] type of our Queen Mary!” as St. Alphonsus de Liguori reiterated. [\[313\]](#)

But first, what is meant by a figure-type? In its application to the whole of Scripture, an Old Testament **figure-type** is a person, place, thing or event foreshadowing a New Testament **archetype** (a perfect model or type). The New Testament archetype is always greater than its Old Testament figure-type. [\[314\]](#)

Our Lord Himself plainly alluded to Scriptural figure-types when, after His Resurrection, He appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things that were concerning him.” Our Lord used similar words when He subsequently appeared to the Apostles. [\[315\]](#)

So, too, "Mary appears on every page of the Old Testament," said St. Bernard. [316] As we have already seen, in *Genesis* 3:15, God Himself literally prophesied Our Lady as "**the** woman," but she is foreshadowed in many figure-types—including but not limited to Miriam, Sarah, the foot-shaped cloud of Mt. Carmel, Ruth, Anna, Judith, and Esther; in the Gebirah (queen mothers of the Davidic kings); in the mother of the seven Machabees; in the spouse of the *Canticle of Canticles*, the daughter of Zion, the burning bush on Mt. Sion, the Ark of the Covenant, the Root of Jesse, the City of God, and the Temple of Jerusalem.

In the *Apocalypse*, **the** Woman (the Virgin Mary) is prefigured by a "type within type"—"a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." [317] This woman is a type of the Church, but the eternal Church is herself a type of Mary. With these examples, one begins to see what is meant by "types within types."

The Book of Esther and the Book of Revelations

Among the many women who are figure-types of the Virgin, Esther is foremost for three reasons: she interceded for her people; her Star appeared on Our Lady's dress; and the number "13" is central to her history. There exist depths in *The Book of Esther's* figure-types, who were living persons in history. However, the following comparisons are those most pertinent for the purposes of this study.

In the Old Testament, the fourth chapter of *The Book of Esther* relates the history of a "fair and exceedingly beautiful" virgin named Edissa, "who by another name was called Esther." [318] In the Old Testament of the Hebrew text, her name was Hádássah—meaning myrtle, a white, five-pointed, **star-shaped** flower. [319]

- An orphan, Esther was raised by her uncle Mardochai, whose immediate ancestors were carried away from Jerusalem to Persia at the onset of the Babylonian Exile. Esther was in her uncle's care from the time she was a "**little one**" [320]—a "figure-type" phrase foreshadowing the Virgin Mary's sublime humility.

- Mardochai himself is an enigmatic "type within type." He seems to embody in his person the faithful in exile, St. Joseph (chaste guardian of the Virgin) but also a "vizier" or vicar, if not the Vicar of Christ. Esther and Mardochai lived in Susan, Persia's capital city. The Persian king was Assuerus (a figure-type for God) and his queen was Vasthi.

The Book of Esther, permeated with figure-types, opens with the historical narration of the king's feast. To grasp the types, one must understand that the first chapter of Esther alludes to the glory of the heavenly kingdom, the hierarchy of creation, the princes of the kingdom (the angels), and the Garden of Paradise, even to the first woman, Eve:

"Now in the third year of his reign, he made a great feast for all the princes, and for his servants, for the most mighty of the Persians, and the nobles of the Medes, and the governors of the provinces, that he might show the riches of the glory of his kingdom, and the greatness, and boasting of his power, for a long time, to wit, for a hundred and fourscore days. And when the days of the feast were expired, he invited all the people that were found in Susan, from the greatest to the least: and commanded a feast to be made seven days, in the court of the garden, and of the wood, which was planted by the care and the hand of the king."[\[321\]](#)

At the time, "Vasthi the queen made a feast for the women in the palace, where the king Assuerus was used to dwell."[\[322\]](#) However, on the seventh day of the second feast, she disobeyed the king's solitary command "to show her beauty to all the people and the princes; for she was exceedingly beautiful. But she refused, and would not come at the king's command."[\[323\]](#)

Vasthi, the first queen, is a historical figure-type for the Lady Eve, queen of the earthly Paradise where God Himself "used to dwell." Like Eve, Vashti forever lost her office when she refused the King's singular command. No more is said of Vasthi's fate other than the words of an edict proclaiming she could "come in no more to the king, but another, that is better than her, be made queen in her place."[\[324\]](#)

"After this, when the wrath of King Assuerus was appeased, he remembered Vasthi, and what she had done and what she had suffered."[\[325\]](#) In the Old Testament, a phrase like "he remembered" signaled that the very next action, no matter how innocuous or unconventional, is an immediate manifestation of God's mercy. This Divine intervention looks like a natural human event, but it is always God Who is behind it. Knowing this helps us understand why one moment the king remembered Vasthi but, in the very next sentence, he issued an edict summoning all the most beautiful virgins of the land, so that he might select a new bride. The virgins were brought to the capital, and "were delivered to Egeus the eunuch; Esther also among the rest of the maidens were delivered to him to be kept in the number of the women."[\[326\]](#)

Figure-types within Figure-types

It was not until the twelfth month that “every virgin’s turn came to go in to the king, after all had been done for setting them off to advantage.” [327] This “going in to the king” represents spiritual union “in God,” which requires grace, time and merits. *The Book of Esther* relates that the virgins were given a year’s preparation before “going in to” the king, “so that for six months they were anointed with oil of myrrh, and for [sic] other six months they used certain perfumes and sweet spices.” [328] All of the virgins underwent this preparation. As shall be seen, a total of four years passed from the time of the king’s edict before Esther’s turn arrived.

The maidens, who typify the entire line of the Old Testament’s holy women, were prepared for a total of 12 months, which is the symbolic number of completion (12 patriarchs from Adam to Jacob, 12 tribes of Israel, 12 loaves of proposition, 12 judges of Israel, 12 months of the year. Additionally, the New Testament, especially *The Book of Apocalypse*, is replete with the number 12: Twelve apostles, 12 legions of angels to whom Jesus refers in the Garden of Gethsemane, 12 fruits of the Holy Ghost, 12 foundation stones in the New Jerusalem and, of course, *Apocalypse* 12:1, prophesying the “great” sign who wears a crown of 12 stars: “And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”) Like the virgins presented to and accepted by Asseurus, the holy women of God were accepted by the Lord, and yet they were not chosen as His queen.

Again, we see figure-types within figure-types. In the Old Testament, myrrh is first mentioned in *The Book of Exodus* and it is used in the “oil of unction,” which God commanded Moses to prepare immediately before the building of the Ark of the Covenant, another figure-type of the Virgin Mary. Myrrh (Arabic, “bitter”) was used for the healing of wounds and bruises. Myrrh was also a symbol of self-sacrifice. [329]

How striking, then, is the six month’s anointing with oil of myrrh during the virgins’ preparation. Likewise, the other perfumes and sweet spices in the second six months’ preparation are reminiscent of the ingredients in the holy incense, which God ordered Moses to set before the tabernacle of the testimony. In all of the Fatima revelations, the need for *prayer* and *sacrifice* was stressed repeatedly.

When Esther’s turn came to “go in to the king...she sought not women’s ornaments, but whatsoever Egeus the eunuch the keeper of the virgins had a

mind, he gave to adorn her. For she was exceedingly fair, agreeable and amiable in the eyes of all...And the king loved her more than all the women, and she had favor and kindness before him above all the women, and he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen instead of Vasthi.”

This event took place “in the tenth month which is called Tebeth, in the seventh year of the king’s reign.” [330] Thus, since the king’s feast took place in the third year of his reign, we know that four years passed and a great number of maidens were presented to the King until Esther’s appearance before him.

In this passage, we can easily see why Esther is a figure-type of the Virgin Mary, she who is “full of grace” and blessed amongst all women. [331]

- The time between Vasthi’s fall to Esther’s appearance before the king is a span of four years. These four years prefigure the four centuries of Advent. [332]

- Tebeth correlates with the Gregorian calendar’s twelfth month of December, [333] the month in which we commemorate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

- When Our Lady, Esther’s archetype, appeared at Fatima, she also wore no adornments other than those symbolizing that with which God Himself adorned her.

The Secrets of the Star

Thus Esther became the Queen of Persia, but for a reason established by the Lord. In obedience to her uncle, Mardochai, she revealed to the king neither her ancestry, nor her Hebrew name, nor their kinship. The Hebrew texts relate that she gave her name as *Hester* (in Persian, *Esther*—which means “star.”). As we shall see, this change in name was more than a translation.

- The alteration from *Hádássah* to *Hester* refers to a secret, because **Hester** (emphasis on the letter “H”) translates to “hidden [meaning of the] star.” [334] Esther had **three** secrets, as does Our Lady of Fatima.

- The Hebrew name for *The Book of Esther* is *Megillat Hester*—e.g., “**revelation of [that which is] hidden.**” [335] By displaying the Star of Esther, it seems Our Lady of Fatima not only wishes to “discreetly suggest a hidden and sublime aspect of her unique vocation” [336] as Mediatrix but also “secrets within secrets” or “revelations within revelations.”

- The word play of *Megillat Hester* suggests another meaning: **God is**

hiding His Face. The Hebrew text of *The Book of Esther*, which ends with Ch. 10:3, lacks any mention of God's name. Jewish scholars refer to the Lord's role as *Hester Panim* or "hidden Face." [337] Clearly, the implications for our own times are staggering.

The plot in Esther builds because her uncle Mardochai did not attend her marriage banquet; rather, he "stayed at the king's gate." [338] This one reference is a figure-type of some depth: The royal marriage banquet foreshadows the Virgin as the Bride of the Divine Spouse and the Church as the Bride of Christ; it reminds us of St. Joseph, the chaste husband of the Virgin Mary (the Eastern Gate, the King's Gate) and the Child Jesus, who is the King of Kings. Mardochai standing at the king's gates typifies he who guards the kingdom of God on earth, as well as the faithful in the kingdom; the gates themselves refer to both the Virgin (Gate of Heaven) and the Church (the Narrow Gate).

So it was that by lingering at the gate, Mardochai overheard a conspiracy to kill the king. He told Esther, who told the king in Mardochai's name, thus saving the king's life. [339]

Soon afterward, the king advanced Aman, of the race of Agag (a race which was at perpetual enmity with the Jews), setting him above all the princes. The king's servants bent their knees and worshiped Aman—all but Mardochai. Aman became so obsessed with Mardochai's fidelity to the First Commandment that he plotted revenge against him and all the Jews. [340]

Cunningly employing his position in the royal court, Aman issued a decree that all Jews living throughout Persia would be massacred on one day, down to the last man, woman, and child. To choose the month of this annihilation, lots were cast into an urn. The month chosen was the twelfth month, called Adar. [341] Some believe that it was Aman (an anti-Christ figure) who chose the day—the 13th day, [342] possibly in homage to the demon-god Nergal. [343]

The Intercession of the Queen

The Scriptures relate that Mardochai asked Esther to intervene with the king, but Esther explained that the king had proclaimed none could enter his inner court without being called; those who dared were immediately put to death unless the king showed his clemency by holding out his golden scepter. Mardochai reminded her, "Think not that thou mayest save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all the Jews...And who knoweth whether thou are not therefore come to the kingdom, that thou

mightest be ready in such a time as this?” [344] This passage also foreshadows Christian doctrine, for the Virgin Mary is placed above all others for the sake of all.

Hearing Mardochai’s plea, Esther for the first time commanded her uncle, saying, “Go...gather together all the Jews...and pray ye for me. Neither eat nor drink for three days and three nights: and I with my handmaids will fast in like manner, and then I will go in to the king, against the law, not being called, and expose myself to death and danger.” [345]

Thus Esther, her maidens, and the faithful throughout all of Persia prayed and fasted. How tragically apt **to our own day** are these words from Esther’s prayer for the people:

“...We have sinned in thy sight, and therefore thou hast delivered us into the hands of our enemies, for we have worshiped their gods. Thou are just, O Lord. And now they are not content to oppress us with most hard bondage, but attributing the strength of their hands to the power of their idols, they design to change thy promises, and destroy thy inheritance, and shut the mouths of them that praise thee, and extinguish the glory of thy temple and altar...” [346]

In the meantime, Aman planned Mardochai’s death, preparing a gibbet upon which he would be hanged. Aman had every reason to believe he would succeed, but his secret goal was the king’s usurpation. However, armed with prayers and sacrifices to God and the king’s love for her, Esther revealed her secrets to Assuerus, denounced Aman, and pled for her people. [347] “If I have found favor in thy sight, oh king, give me my people for which I request.” [348]

“But the king being angry rose up from the place of the banquet into the garden set with trees.” Aman also rose up to entreat Esther the queen for his life, for he understood that evil was prepared for him by the king. And when the king came back...he found Aman was fallen upon the bed on which Esther lay...” [349] Seeing this and thinking that Aman’s audacity knew no limits, the king ordered his death on the very gibbet prepared for Mardochai. [350] Assuerus then placed Mardochai in Aman’s place, making him second in authority after the king—another emphasis that Mardochai is the figure-type of a “vicar,” who is the steward of a king. [351]

Aman, as a figure-type, suggests a high-level infiltration within the kingdom (the Church), which plots to overthrow the King by first executing the steward of the monarch (the Pope, Vicar of Christ the King). To

accomplish this, he and others lay plans to also destroy the king's true allies (the elect who, in Esther's time, were the faithful Jews but who are, since Jesus' death and Resurrection, the loyal Catholics). Aman's act of throwing himself upon Esther implies a great offense against the Virgin, resulting in the wrath of God.

The Faithful Must Stand for Their Lives

To save the Jews, the king gave Mardochai liberty to issue a new edict commanding the Jews "to gather themselves together, and to stand for their lives." [352]

After the battle of the 13th of Adar, the king was told the number of those slaughtered and then asked Esther, "What wilt thou have me to command to be done?" [353] Esther asked that it be granted to the Jews "to do to morrow in Susan as they have done this day and that the ten sons of Aman may be hanged on gibbets." [354] So it was that the Jews defended themselves in the capital city on both the 13th and 14th days of Adar. But in other areas of Persia, the battle occurred only on the 13th. [355]

From the human standpoint, the requests of Mardochai and Esther appear vindictive but, when understood as figure-types, we better follow the meanings. The Jews represent the ecclesia of the Old Dispensation saved from annihilation. Esther's request to the king signifies the Virgin's desire to completely eradicate all of the heresies afflicting the Catholic City; the death of Aman and his ten sons suggest the defeat of the apocalyptic anti-Christ and the ten horns of the Beast. [356]

The doctrine of Mediatrix of all Graces is foreshadowed in Esther, the mediatrix of her people. Thus, Esther is a great figure-type for the Virgin Mary, especially under her title *Our Lady of Fatima*.

Like Esther, the Virgin of Fatima acts to save her people from annihilation, first asking that the pope, bishops and the lay faithful heed all of her requests. Unlike Esther, however, the Virgin Mary does not need our prayers and sacrifices for her own sake, but for ours.

Sr. Lucia and the 13th of February

In the Biblical sense, the date, day and time of Lucia's death on February 13, 2005 are **three great signs** from heaven. As we've already seen, February 13 directs us to the history of Queen Esther, and all that it signifies. The third sign is the day of Lucia's passing, which fell just before sunset on the first Sunday in Lent, the liturgical season dedicated to prayer

and self-sacrifice. (According to the Gregorian calendar month, the date was February 13, which on the Jewish lunar calendar of that year was the 4th of Adar II. In this day and month, we see a “meshing” of dates in salvation history because, with few exceptions, today the Gregorian calendar is utilized throughout the world. With Lucia’s passing, it seems that God wished to again draw attention to at least three things: **1)** Sunday, the Sabbath, which is the day that the Lord commanded the elect to keep holy; **2)** the 13th day, which is associated with both Our Lady of Fatima and Queen Esther’s history; and **3)** the connection in Esther’s story to the Hebrew month of Adar, the month chosen by lot to destroy the Old Testament’s elect.) Surely, Our Lady’s words to the child Lucia have proven true in every aspect: “Jesus wishes to use you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. To whoever embraces this devotion, I promise salvation; these souls shall be dear to God, as flowers placed by me to adorn His throne.” [\[357\]](#)

This devotion throughout the world has not yet occurred, because there has been no solemn collegial consecration of Russia to the Virgin’s Immaculate Heart. For this singular, constant offense against her request, Heaven has already warned that what awaits us is a horrific victory of the incessant Revolt against the Church and the Holy Father. The culmination is rapidly approaching.

Certain words of Our Lord’s to Sr. Lucia strongly indicate that the ominous portent of the Third Secret of Fatima may occur within fifteen years’ time (by June 13, 2029, which marks the centenary of Our Lady’s return to Lucia to tell the Holy Father that the “the moment” had come when God Himself asked for the collegial consecration of Russia, promising to save that country by this means.). This probable tragedy alone should inspire those who possess confidence in Our Lady of Fatima to courageously accept our collective obligation to declare the entire Fatima message throughout the Catholic world.

A particular warning of Our Lord’s to Sr. Lucia about the collegial consecration brings to our attention the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in Paray-le-Monial, France. Through this saint, Our Lord gave the world the devotion of the Nine First Fridays with its Twelve Promises. Yet there is another serious matter surrounding these apparitions to the saint, one which is very little known.

St. Margaret Mary was told by the Lord that she was to **"inform the**

King of France, 'Eldest son of His Sacred Heart,' that the Sacred Heart wished 'to reign in his palace, to be painted on his standard, to be engraved on his arms,' and that it [the Sacred Heart] will make him 'triumphant over all the enemies of Holy Church,' if the King obeyed Christ's command on these matters. However, as history relates, “Either Louis XIV never received the letter or he refused to reply. **But the command still stands.**” [\[358\]](#)

On **June 17, 1689**, Our Lord also told the saint to tell the Catholic King Louis XIV that France must be solemnly consecrated to His Sacred Heart. This command, too, was ignored by the king and his heirs. As a result, France, called “the first daughter of the Church” because it was the first country in which the Catholic Faith was recognized as the nation’s religion, succumbed to the “enemies of the **Church.**”

The Time Limit Expired

Exactly one hundred years later, on June 17, 1789, the godless “Third Estate” declared itself a national assembly, lawlessly stripping the reigning Catholic monarch (Louis XVI) of his authority. Thus the Reign of Terror went into full motion; the king, his queen, and other innocents were martyred. Due to the ravenous “Mademoiselle Guillotine” and her devotees, the streets literally ran ankle-deep in blood because apostasy reigned. [\[359\]](#)

To think of what France—and with it, the Church—could have been spared, if only one of the reigning kings had obeyed the simple command of Our Lord!

Christ our King wished to establish the public consecration and devotion to His Sacred Heart in order to save France, "First Daughter of the Church," and with it, Christendom. As we now know through the apparitions to Sr. Lucia of Fatima, the Sacred Heart also wills the collegial consecration of **Russia** to the Immaculate Heart of Mary—this time to save the entire world from the punishments it deserves for its many sins.

Our Lord also made it known to Sr. Lucia that He wishes to have the whole world acknowledge that Russia and the world will be saved by the collegial consecration, so that the Immaculate Heart of His Mother will honored beside His Sacred Heart.

If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments

In briefly reviewing the tragic history of the French Revolution, especially the fates of the Catholic monarchs and thousands of innocents, we

fully understand how the Lord's apparitions and requests at Paray-le-Monial are linked to Our Lady's requests at Fatima.

On July 13, 1917, Our Lady said to the child Lucia: "...I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and an era of peace will be granted to the world." [\[360\]](#)

She kept her promise that she would return to formally ask for the two acts mentioned above, but she did so on two separate occasions. First, on December 10, 1925, Our Lady appeared to Lucia, showing her a Heart encircled by thorns. By Her side on a luminous cloud stood the Child Jesus, Who said: "Have compassion on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother, covered with thorns, with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them."

Then the Virgin spoke to Lucia: "Look, my daughter, at My Heart, surrounded with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce Me at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You at least try to console Me and say that I promise to assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall confess, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary, and keep Me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to Me."

Eleven years, eleven months after her first notification in 1917, the Virgin again appeared to Lucia—**on June 13, 1929**—to make the formal request regarding the consecration of Russia. Sr. Lucia was making a Holy Hour from 11 p.m. until midnight from Thursday to Friday. Alone in the chapel, Lucia said, "The only light was from the sanctuary lamp."

"Suddenly a supernatural light illumined the whole chapel and on the altar appeared on a cross of light which reached to the ceiling.

"In a brighter part could be seen, on the upper part of the Cross, the face of a man and His body to the waist. On His breast was an equally luminous dove. And nailed to the cross, the body of another man.

“A little below the waist, suspended in mid-air, was to be seen a Chalice and a large Host onto which fell some drops of Blood from the face of the Crucified and from a wound in His breast. These drops ran down over the Host and fell into the Chalice.

“Under the right arm of the Cross was Our Lady with her Immaculate Heart in her hand. (It was Our Lady of Fatima with her Immaculate Heart, in her left hand, without a sword or roses, but with a crown of thorns and flames.)

“Under the left arm [of the Cross] some big letters, as it were of crystal clear water running down over the Altar, formed these words: ‘Grace and Mercy.’

“I understood that it was the mystery of the Holy Trinity that was shown to me, and I received lights about this mystery which I am not permitted to reveal.”

“Then Our Lady said to me:

‘The moment has come when God asks the Holy Father to make, in union with all the bishops of the world, the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, promising to save it by this means.’

‘So numerous are the souls which the Justice of God condemns for sins committed against me, that I come to ask for reparation. Sacrifice yourself for this intention and pray.’

Lucia then related, “I gave an account of this to my confessor, who ordered me to write what Our Lord willed to be done.” [\[361\]](#)

Two years passed, but Sr. Lucia’s endeavors proved fruitless. Those with the authority to fulfill the command would not comply.

In August 1931, Our Lord Himself spoke to Sr. Lucia, referring to **His** command for the collegial consecration of Russia. By the choice of God's own words, He left no doubt that the request of His Mother was also His own command and Will:

“Make it known to My ministers that given they follow the example of the King of France in delaying the execution of My request, they will follow him into misfortune. It will never be too late to have recourse to Jesus and Mary.” [\[362\]](#)

With only the release of the Third Secret Vision (which did not include Our Lady’s words elucidating it), Our Lord's warning to Sr. Lucia in 1931 makes itself tragically clear...

Like the Kings of France who for 100 years disobeyed the heavenly

King's command by delaying the solemn consecration of France to the Sacred Heart, the Savior Himself has warned that His religious ministers who do the same in regard to the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary "will follow the French king into misfortune."

Like the countless numbers who also followed the King of France and his family "into misfortune" by their deaths at the guillotine, the Third Secret Vision of Fatima makes it clear that, "if my (Our Lady's) requests are not heard, "a bishop dressed in white" (generally understood to be the Bishop of Rome, the Pope) will die at the hands of soldiers who bear both guns and arrows, followed by a long line of faithful Catholics from all states in life. [\[363\]](#)

In regard to the long-awaited collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, is it not possible that Our Lord was also telling us that, "like the King of France," He will again allow **exactly** 100 years for His ministers to completely obey Him? If so, will the 100 years conclude either on **July 13, 2017** (the anniversary of the Great Secret of Fatima, when the Virgin said she would, in the future, come to ask for the consecration, as well as for the First Five Saturdays of Reparation) or on **June 13, 2029** (the centenary of the date when Our Lady returned to request the collegial consecration)? Should the 100 years close on the latter date (and reason concludes it to be so, since it was on June 13, 1929 that the Virgin said, "The moment has come"), the time limit expires only 15 years hence from the May, 2014 publication of this book.

PART 11

The Signs and the Traces of Hidden Things

“The light and the sun rose up, and the humble were exalted...”
-*Esther 11:11*

At Fatima, Our Lady’s distinct words provided Heaven’s counsel and admonition, while the accompanying signs and symbols fulfilled all seven purposes that authentic prodigies may hold. While scholars examine the text from and about Fatima in regard to the Third Secret and the collegial consecration, we must also study the Fatima signs. That God wills the elect to understand His signs, at the proper time, is supported by inerrant Scripture: “For the Lord knoweth all knowledge, and hath beheld the signs of the world, he declareth the things that are past, and the things that are to come, and **revealeth the traces of hidden things.**” [\[364\]](#)

The Seven Purposes of Signs

Part 3 of this book stated: “Throughout salvation history, the signs of God indicate various purposes. **A true sign** can possess any one or more of the following seven functions: It confirms God’s Word, His goodness, authenticates prophesy, verifies God’s blessings and His intervention for the sake of the elect, strengthens the faithful with hope, insures or testifies to God’s Presence, or declares His judgment upon sin.” [\[365\]](#) The **signs of the world** oppose the Catholic City, both in her human and divine nature, leading souls to revolt against God, mimicking but falsifying God’s Word, undermining true prophecy, weakening or destroying the virtues by employing their imitators as replacements, and working contrary to God’s Will. [\[366\]](#) In sum, God’s signs and the world’s signs contradict each other. This explains why “the whole truth about Fatima,” [\[367\]](#) specific to the salvation of souls living in this era, remains contradicted by the world.

Fatima follows the pattern of Scriptural prophecy, which is given by visions, words, types and signs. Regarding the Church’s practice as it concerns Scriptural interpretation, the usual course is to first seek the literal meaning of the text of its prophecy and only then seek its symbolic meaning. As most Catholic biblical exegetes agree, “When the generations for whom it

was chiefly intended would come into being, the true author of all true prophecy, the Holy Spirit, would in his own ways allow his elect to take from the text the knowledge that had from the beginning been concealed therein. In this, then, is to be found the reason why the magisterium of the Church, which is based directly on tradition in all matters of faith and morals, must depend largely on experience and the interpretation of signs when there is a question of unfulfilled or only partially fulfilled prophecy.” [368]

What St. Justin the Martyr said in relation to the Old Testament which prophesied Jesus as the Son of God can also be applied to the public revelation and prophecies of Fatima: We are “compelled to belief by those who prophesied before the events. With our own eyes, we are witness to things **that have happened and are happening**, just as they were predicted. And this, we think, will appear to you as the strongest and surest proof.” [369]

Fatima, judged by the Church as “worthy of belief,” [370] prophesied “things that have happened and are happening.” Above all, Fatima has proven to be in perfect accord with Church dogma and doctrine, which is the supreme test of any revelation. The validity of the Virgin’s merciful message and apocalyptic warnings—and, principally, the solution to avert the latter from fulfilment—was authenticated by miraculous signs, from the seemingly small to the stupendous.

The Mother of God vs. Modernism

The Virgin Herself is a sign: “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel.*” [371] Our Lady is the same Woman foretold in Genesis who will crush the serpent and his plots: “*I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.*” [372]

This same Virgin, who came to Fatima, concisely underscored dogma, doctrine, sacred history and Scriptural prophecy in the dates she appeared, the place she chose, the distinct dress and adornments she wore, the succinct words she uttered, the visions and secrets she revealed, and the many signs she gave. Together they form a consistent whole, fortifying the Secret given in three parts, applying to: first, the salvation of souls; second, the salvation of the nations and of Christendom, which shall result in the peace of the world; and third, the preservation of the Catholic Faith and the salvation of the Church. For, as previously stated: “These three themes, which are joined

by an indissoluble bond, reveal to us the extraordinary mystical, moral, political, ecclesial, and dogmatic implications of the Secret of Fatima.” [373]

Not long before the first Fatima apparition, Pope St. Pius X had issued *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907) against the modernists and *Our Apostolic Mandate* (1910), in which within the latter document the sainted Pope declared:

“We must repeat with the utmost energy in these times of social and intellectual anarchy when everyone takes it upon himself to teach as a teacher and lawmaker—**the City cannot be built otherwise than as God has built it**; society cannot be set up unless the Church lays the foundations and supervises the work; no, civilization is not something yet to be found, nor is the New City to be built on hazy notions; it has been in existence and still is: it is Christian civilization, **it is the Catholic City**. It has only to be **set up and restored continually against the unremitting attacks of insane dreamers, rebels and miscreants**. OMNIA INSTAURARE IN CHRISTO. (To restore all things in Christ)” [374]

Because the heresy of Modernism is insubordinate to Tradition and Scripture, it redefines *everything* pertaining to sacred dogma and doctrine, leaving no stone of the Catholic City unturned. It is especially defiant against Vatican I, which affirmed the “sacred dogmas must be perpetually maintained, which Holy Mother Church has once declared; and there must never be a recession from that meaning *under the pretext of a deeper understanding*.” [375] As the prophetic *Pascendi* expounded, modernism pretends that dogmas are merely symbols instead of absolute truths. “Thus the way is open to the intrinsic evolution of dogma. Here we have an immense structure of sophisms [false reasoning] which ruin and wreck all religion.” [376]

Modernism, the “synthesis of all heresies,” [377] is an insidious sign of apostasy that lives in the souls of men, wherein should reside the kingdom of God. [378] It is the heresy of inversion, spawned by the same evil entity behind liberalism, which brought forth the “Enlightenment,” the French Revolution, and “The Age of Reason.” However, throughout salvation history, when the elect are (or soon shall be) insidiously besieged, God manifests His Divine Intervention in diverse ways—as did the Sacred Heart in the visions of Paray-le-Monial before liberalism and rationalism began to sweep Christian Europe.

The year 1830 initiated the prelude to “The Age of Mary,” in which the

Virgin Mother of God herself began to earnestly entreat Her children, giving us a repeated message of prayer and penance, and sacramentals like the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, the Badge of the Immaculate Heart (the Green Scapular), and the miraculous water at Lourdes. Yet Fatima is the crown of all, with its message and its signs to the world, culminating in the Miracle of the Sun.

**The First Sign:
Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Ghost,
Figure of the New Israel, the Church**

The smallest of the Fatima signs are two adornments of the Virgin. The ornaments, however, speak for themselves, if only we have the eyes to see: *“For it is good to hide the secret of a king, but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God.”* [379]

The first symbol was a waist-length yellow necklace, from which hung a luminous orb or ball of light; the orb shone even brighter than the radiating light of Our Lady’s risen and glorious body. [380] The second ornament was a small yellow star, suspended on Our Lady’s long gown between knee and hem. [381] There is no extant record that Our Lady or Sr. Lucia, the last surviving visionary who died in 2005, ever explained these two adornments, although Lucia obviously described their appearance. Might her silence on them be connected to the Third Secret?

Of the necklace and the shining orb, Fatima historian and expert Frère Michel of the Holy Trinity wrote, “... in the light of the liturgy, itself completely saturated with Holy Scripture, it seems to us that we can easily guess the symbolic meaning of this ornament. Does it not remind us of the ‘jewels,’ the traditional attribute of the spouse? *Sicut sponsam ornatum monilibus suis*—‘As a bride adorned with her jewels,’ continues the canticle of Isaiah, which the Church places on the lips of the Immaculate One.”

“Is it not in this sense that we must look for the most profound significance of this mysterious jewel described by Lucia? Several verses of the Canticum seem to invite us to do so; thus the divine Spouse [is] speaking to the Bride, the figure of Israel and of the Church, personified in the Blessed Virgin: *‘You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!’* (Cant. 4:9-10)” [382]

The Second Sign:

The Mediatrix of All Graces

The meaning of the jewel and necklace is intertwined with the little yellow star, which we have already seen is “The Star of Esther,” and which “points to a particular Old Testament history called *The Book of Esther*, which relates the story of a Hebrew queen whose intercession saved her people from annihilation...Just as the star adorning Our Lady of Fatima points to *The Book of Esther*, so does *The Book of Esther* point to all of the Fatima revelations. Esther’s theme centers on secrets and revelations, suggesting [it] is a figure type for *The Apocalypse* (Greek for Revelations) ...*The Book of Esther* appears to encapsulate what Fatima highlights about both the Virgin’s and the Church’s singular office in salvation history.”

Centuries ago, St. Alphonsus agreed with St. Albert who noted Queen Esther [383] as a figure type of the Virgin Mary. Since the Star of Esther was one of the Fatima Virgin’s adornments, it is clear that *The Book of Esther* calls for a thoroughly traditional, theological study. That said, it must also be noted that no Church Doctor ever attempted a complete examination of this canonical, historical book. For those of us living in the Fatima era, the proper interpretation of *Esther* is vital. The interpretation must be in accord with Church dogma and doctrine, the constitution of the Church, apostolic tradition, and the study of history with a “Catholic conscience.” [384] Such a venture includes “studies into the spiritual, moral, social, political, educational, economic and cultural conditions of the times,” [385] employing the truths of Faith and scholastic reason.

Both of the Virgin’s adornments reveal the “secrets” of Mary and about Mary, which are carefully hidden in the Old Testament and apocalyptic figure types. As to the method prescribed for the interpretation of Scripture (which, with Tradition, is one of the two sources of Revelation), Pope Pius IX clarified that “the rules which the holy Synod of Trent salutarily decreed concerning the interpretation of Divine Scripture in order to restrain impetuous minds, are wrongly explained by certain men. We, renewing the same decree, declare this to be its intention: that, in matters of faith and morals pertaining to the instruction of Christian Doctrine, that must be considered as the true sense of Sacred Scripture which Holy Mother Church has held and holds, whose office it is to judge concerning the true understanding and interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures; and, for that reason, no one is permitted to interpret Sacred Scripture itself *contrary* to the sense, or even *contrary* to the unanimous agreement of the Fathers...” [386] Regarding the

literal and mystical sense of Scripture, Pope Pius XII taught, “In this work, let interpreters keep in mind that their greatest care should be to discern and define what the so-called literal sense of the Bible is.” [387] In obedience to Trent’s decree, this examination of *The Book of Esther* will hold to the sense held by the Church and the Fathers, recalling what St. Augustine stated: **“What lies hidden in the Old Testament, is made manifest in the New.”** [388]

The Central Figures in Esther

Before continuing, a brief recap on the story of Esther is necessary. Almost five hundred years before Christ, God raised up a Hebrew virgin, an orphan adopted and educated by her uncle Mardochai, to save the Israelites from annihilation. Through an unusual series of events, she became the queen of ancient Persia, living in its capital city of Susan.

The very name of this Hebrew queen, who was loved by the king above all others, refers to “hidden things.” To repeat from the previous section, she was “named Edissa, ‘who by another name was called Esther.’ In the Old Testament of the Hebrew text, her name was Hádássah—meaning *myrtle*, a white, five-pointed, star-shaped flower. The Hebrew texts also relate that she gave her name as **Hester** (in Persian, *Esther*—which means ‘star.’)...The alteration from Hádássah to **Hester** refers to a secret, because **Hester** translates to ‘hidden [meaning of the] star.’” In addition, the “Hebrew name for *The Book of Esther* is *Megillat Esther*—e.g., “revelation of [that which is] hidden.”

Intriguing as a figure type is Assuerus, Esther’s spouse, the unfathomable Persian monarch apparently serving as a figure type of God. Modern-day Iran is the heart of ancient Persia, even to the city of Susan (Susa). Is it not possible that Our Lady’s choices to appear at Fatima, a village named after a Mohammedan woman who converted to Catholicism, and to display of Esther’s Star provide many traces of the Third Secret’s hidden things? **For *The Book of Esther* centers on secrets and revelations, a plot among nations against one kingdom and the elect, prayer and sacrifice, and the final triumph of the Queen.**

Esther’s history may prefigure the world’s punishments by further persecutions of the Church and the Holy Father in the form of war against crumbling Christendom by Mohammedanism, as well as by nations under the influence of Russia, which has “spread her errors throughout the world.” [389] Also contemplate the description of the Third Secret Vision, which

depicts soldiers bearing “guns and arrows” [390] and consider which soldiers today use both of these weapons. Like Esther who softened the Persian king’s wrath and changed his heart, we can be confident that Our Lady of Fatima will, after the collegial consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and the papal promulgation of the Five First Saturdays, also convert many souls, including the hearts of those who now hold to Islam.

In *The Book of Esther*, however, Assuerus’ Persian kingdom appears to represent the kingdom of God on earth but also the heavenly kingdom. His first queen, Vasthi, represents Eve while Esther, his second queen, prefigures the Virgin Mary. Mardochai, uncle of Esther, is “an enigmatic ‘type within type.’ He seems to embody in his person the faithful in exile but also a ‘vizier’ or vicar, if not the Vicar of Christ.” [391] As Esther’s guardian, he is also figurative of St. Joseph, guardian and chaste spouse of the Virgin, archetype of Esther and the Church. As we know, St. Joseph briefly appeared during the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima to bless the world with the Christ Child.

Finally, there is Mardochai’s nemesis, Aman “of the race of Agag.” [392] This reference is yet another trace—this time to the struggles between Esau and Jacob, the twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca (another type of the Virgin). These brothers prefigure two nations or “cities”—the first of reprobates and the second of Jesus Christ and the elect. [393] The race of Agag are also known as Amalcites and Edomites (descendants of Esau [394]), about whom God Himself prophesied “**the war of the Lord shall be against Amalec, from generation to generation.**” [395] Due to their pride and treachery against Jacob, God revealed in a vision to Abdias the eventual destruction of Esau’s line. As punishment, the Edomites would never experience a final triumph over Jacob; [396] rather, they would be eventually reduced to “stubble,” until there “shall be no remains of the house of Esau.” [397] Astonishingly, in Abdias’ vision, the Lord asked, “How have they searched Esau, **how have they sought out his hidden things?**” [398]

Returning to Aman, King Assuerus’ first vizier, he was called “our father” and “was worshipped by all as the next man after the king,” [399] a worship that defies the First Commandment in lieu of appropriate honor of a high office. However, from the beginning of his appointment, Aman secretly schemed, first against the king and later, due to his personal hatred of Mardochai the Jew, against the entire nation of the Hebrews.

It follows that Aman also appears to serve as a “a type within type” of

treason against God and His Kingdom—e.g., as Lucifer-turned-Satan (the highest angel in the hierarchy of angels who revolted against God and tried to ascend to His throne), an anti-Christ figure, and one who gains and then abuses the authority of his high position by plotting against “the three necessary societies”—the family, civil society, and the Church. [400] As illustrated in the Old Testament, his perfidious qualities—including lying, conspiracy, hypocrisy, soothing words, deceit, feigned indulgence and favor—are always those of the traitor. [401] These traits are also descriptive of Judas, [402] once Christ’s apostle and friend, as well as of many Christians in the end times. [403]

In a word, Aman prefigures treachery “not from without but from within” [404] the earthly kingdom of God, against the Lord and His people. In relation to Fatima and the Star of Esther, his role as nemesis against the elect must be taken seriously. The Old Testament makes clear that the Israelites were the elect, but today’s elect are the faithful Catholics. As St. Justin the Martyr explained, since the time of Christ, “The true spiritual Israel, descendants of Judah and Jacob and Isaac and Abraham...are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ.” [405]

The Consolation of the Elect

The imagery found in *Esther* and the *Apocalypse*, both among the Church’s infallible canonical books, bear great similarities. *Esther* appears to prefigure the *Apocalypse*, which “is chiefly the grand finale of the Kingdom of God on earth, the completion of all prophecies in a final synthesis.” [406] Both books console the elect “in the hardships of a virtuous life and in the dangers of practicing their religion with persecutions facing them.” [407] In *Esther*, the dream of Mardochai relates:

“Behold there were voices, and tumults, and thunders, and earthquakes, and a disturbance upon the earth. And behold two great dragons came forth ready to fight one against another. And at their cry all nations were stirred up to fight against the nation of the just. And that was a day of darkness and danger, of tribulation and distress, and great fear upon the earth. And the nation of the just was troubled fearing their own evils, and was prepared for death. And they cried to God: and as they were crying, a little fountain grew into a very great river, and abounded into many waters.”

“The light and the sun rose up, and the humble were exalted, and they devoured the glorious. And when Mardochai had seen this, and arose out

of his bed, he was thinking what God would do: and he kept it fixed in his mind, desirous to know what the dream should signify.” [408]

This dream was later interpreted by Mardochai, who waited a decade before its meaning was made manifest:

“The little fountain which grew into a river, and was turned into a light, and into the sun, and abounded into many waters, is Esther, whom the king married, and made queen. But the two dragons are I and Aman. The nations that were assembled are they that endeavoured to destroy the name of the Jews. And my nation is Israel, who cried to the Lord, and **the Lord saved his people:** and he delivered us from all evils, and **hath wrought great signs and wonders among the nations:** And he commanded that there should be **two lots**, one of the people of God, and the other of all the nations. And both lots came to the day appointed already from that time before God to all nations: And the Lord remembered his people, and had mercy on his inheritance.” [409]

Since Esther is a great Marian figure type, should we not carefully consider the “types within types” of Mardochai’s dream, especially the parts which he later understood symbolized the Queen? Note also that **it was only** when in terror and preparing for death that the **nation of the just** first “cried to God,” and it was as they were crying that this little fountain grew into a great river. Might this dream prefigure what will happen in our own day? **Must the Third Secret Vision come to pass before the nation of the just cry to God for His intercession, which must be accomplished through the Mediatrix of All Graces?**

The Holy Spirit says of the Virgin: “My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.” [410] In the Scriptures, a fountain symbolically prefigures fear of the Lord, wisdom, the law of the wise, understanding, God’s blessings, or the Virgin Mary. [411] A river may designate the prosperity of the saints, affliction, Christ or the Virgin, God’s Presence, the Holy Ghost, and God’s Love. [412] The Sun or its light indicates grace, God’s Presence, His Glory and Justice, or the glory of the just. [413] At Fatima, the Virgin—the Fountain Enclosed, the River of Grace—shone with a light more brilliant than the sun, and it was she who gave the spectacular sign of the Miracle of the Sun.

Finally, the first sentence describing Mardochai’s dream includes the elements:

- “Behold there were **voices**, and **tumults**, and **thunders**, and

earthquakes, and a disturbance upon the earth.” [414]

So does the very last sentence of the *Apocalypse*’s eleventh chapter mention the elements, immediately before “a woman clothed with the sun” is seen:

• “And the temple of God was opened in heaven: and **the ark of his testament was seen in his temple**, and there were **lightnings**, and **voices**, and **an earthquake**, and **great hail**.” [415]

There are other parallels between *Esther* and the *Apocalypse*, with the following only a sampling: allusions to the kingdom of God; all the classes of mankind; the patience of the elect in exile; a wedding feast, persecutions of the elect by other nations (the reprobates); false worship; apostasy; penance and sackcloth; the ancient Persians (modern-day Iranians); great signs and wonders among the nations; “a woman” of royalty; a dragon or dragons (one in the *Apocalypse*, “a great red dragon,” but two in *Esther*, which Mardochai eventually understood represented he and Aman); water; the sun; voices, tumults, tribulations, thunder; and earthquakes.

The Continuing Tale of Two Cities

In fine, both books tell “the tale of two cities” from the beginning of the world—*Esther* in abridged form, *The Apocalypse* in its entirety. As St. Augustine wrote:

“**Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves**: the earthly by the love of self, **even to the contempt of God**; the heavenly by the love of God, **even to the contempt of self**. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, ‘Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.’”

“In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are **ruled by the love of ruling**; in the other, the princes and the subjects **serve one another in love**, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all. **The one delights in its own strength**, represented in the persons of its rulers; **the other says to its God**, ‘I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.’”

“And therefore the wise men of the one city, **living according to man**, have sought for profit to their own bodies or souls, or both, and those who have known God ‘glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise,’—that is, **glorifying in their own wisdom**,

and being **possessed by pride**,—‘they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.’

“**For they were either leaders or followers of the people in adoring images, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.’ But in the other city there is no human wisdom, but only godliness, which offers due worship to the true God, and looks for its reward in the society of the saints, of holy angels as well as holy men, ‘that God may be all in all.’”** [\[416\]](#)

Only the Lady Queen Can Help You

We recall that, once Esther was aware of Aman’s decree to annihilate the entire Jewish nation throughout Persia, she privately sent a message to Mardochai—a command to him and all the people to pray and fast for her intention, taking no food or water for three days, before she interceded with the king. [\[417\]](#) She and her maidens did likewise.

In her prayer to God, the Queen acknowledged that the punishments so far forthcoming were due to the **apostasy** among her people. [\[418\]](#) But now they were faced with total annihilation, and their only hope was the Queen—just as Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima said of herself in the third person, “Only she can help you.” Thankfully, the king heard Esther’s plea and the elect were saved.

In light of Fatima, we must wonder—**what would have happened if the elect had ignored the Queen’s command?** What if they doubted that she could intercede with the king for their sake?

At the conclusion of *The Book of Esther*, we find the probable outcome to those questions in the king’s letter, favoring the Jews and condemning the executed Aman, who was once second after the king. If the people disregarded Esther’s command for prayer and penance, which allowed her to intercede and soften the king’s heart, **the ultimate outcome would have been the elect annihilated and the kingdom overtaken by secret enemies.** [\[419\]](#)

Sr. Lucia once referred to chapters 8-13 of the *Apocalypse*, which exhibits the same theme of treachery, apostasy (that begins “at the top” [\[420\]](#)), and a final attempt to annihilate the Church and the elect, in order to usurp the Kingdom of God. It is also strongly suggested in the Vision of the Third Secret with the martyrdom of “a bishop dressed in white” and all the faithful who die in the same manner. As Sr. Lucia revealed, when asked

about the Third Secret, “It’s in the *Gospel* and the *Apocalypse*. Read them!”
[\[421\]](#)

PART 12

Fatima and the Great *Et Cetera*: Traces of the Third Secret Message

“Truly, it is the greatest of errors to neglect the business of eternal salvation.”

–*St. Eucherius*

That the entire Third Secret, given in July 1917, remains hidden is clear to many Catholics. The disclosure of the Third Secret’s Vision contradicts those who claim that the “veil is removed from the greatest mystery of the twentieth century” [\[422\]](#) and that events leading to the Third Secret “now seem a part of the past.” [\[423\]](#) Despite various papal consecrations of the *world* and acts of entrustment made from 1942 to 2013, at least three of the Fatima prophecies have come to pass, while the third—the martyrdom of the good—continues. Daily news reports alone should convince all Catholics that to avoid the fulfillment of the Third Secret, the Holy Father and the world’s bishops must consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Our Lady’s messages and prophecies to the Church are too often treated by clergy and laity as a few redundant reminders. Casually dismissed is the truth that the Three Secrets of Fatima are firmly founded on Divine Revelation and authentic prophecy. Based on Faith and facts, the following is apparent: 1) world-wide devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (which includes the papal promulgation of the Five First Saturdays of Reparation) has not come to fruition, 2) the collegial consecration of **Russia** has not been made 3) the entire Third Secret *Message* is not yet revealed, and 4) if the first three requests are not heeded, the tragedies of the past century will reach their apex in the Third Secret *Vision*’s fulfillment and the annihilation (the complete destruction) of various nations.

It is reasonable—although painfully so—to reach these conclusions because there are objective, coinciding reasons for them. First, there has been no papal promulgation of the Five First Saturdays, although there is sometimes mention of praying the Rosary. Second, there has never been any specific mention of Russia in any papal consecration or entrustment. Third, the world’s bishops did not join the popes who made those acts. Fourth, the world has not yet experienced the prophesied “era of peace” promised by

Our Lady. So let us look once more for the “traces of hidden things.”

Fatima and the Significance of the 13th

Catholics may wonder why Our Lady first appeared at Fatima on May 13, as well as the 13th day of each month through October, 1917 (with the singular exception of August 19, 1917, due to the Fatima visionaries’ imprisonment on August 13).

- First and foremost, May 13 was originally dedicated to Our Lady of the Martyrs. On May 13, 609 A.D., Pope St. Boniface IV (608-615), [\[424\]](#) converted the Roman Pantheon into a basilica, dedicating the edifice to Our Lady under her title, *St. Mary of the Martyrs*.

In 1561, this basilica, [\[425\]](#) built in the very heart of the Baths of Diocletian (an emperor by whom the early Christians suffered the most vicious persecutions and martyrdoms), “received its [current] official name, *St. Mary of the Angels and the Martyrs*.” [\[426\]](#)

Correlation: Both the date and place of Our Lady’s first Fatima appearance silently emphasized her title as *St. Mary of the Angels and the Martyrs*, for the Cova da Iria (the Cove of Irene) appears to be named for the virgin martyr, St. Irene of Tomar. [\[427\]](#) It was on July 13 that Our Lady gave the Three Secrets, warning that if her requests were not heeded, “the good will be martyred, various nations will be annihilated.” [\[428\]](#) The description of the Third Secret *Vision* also includes two angels who gather the blood of martyrs. [\[429\]](#)

- There is another striking link between the basilica named in honor of *St. Mary of the Angels and the Martyrs* and the appearances of Our Lady of Fatima, which have to do with **the sun**. Almost one thousand years after the basilica’s dedication, Pope Clement XI [\[430\]](#) (reigning 1700-1721), the same Vicar of Christ who declared the Feast of the Immaculate Conception as a holy day of obligation, commissioned Francesco Bianchini—an astronomer, mathematician, archeologist, historian, and philosopher—to build inside the church a “meridian line” for the city of Rome. (A beautiful example of science combined with Catholic culture, this meridian line is known as “The Clementina,” named after the pope who ordered its construction).

To track the path of the sun, Bianchini made careful calculations, then created a small hole in the southern wall of the basilica, and laid into the marble floor the meridian line, which runs exactly north to south. The result is that, when the sun reaches its zenith (called solar noon or solar time), light

shines through the hole on the wall, casting its light on the meridian line. By the clock, however, this event [431] takes place near 12:15 p.m. (1:15 p.m. in the summer). [432]

The meridian lines' purpose was to check the parameters [433] of the solar-based "Gregorian Calendar," so named after Pope Gregory XIII, who advanced the Catholic Restoration after the Protestant Revolt. To exactly predict Easter, which is based on the vernal equinox, Pope Gregory XIII also revised the Julian solar-based calendar. However, the Gregorian calendar is "so nearly exact that there will be an error of one day only in 35 centuries." [434] Pope Gregory officially promulgated the solar-based calendar, which took effect on October 4, 1582, thus immediately advancing the calendar date by 11 days.

Correlation: The first basilica ever named after **Our Lady of the Martyrs** also tracks **the sun**, which is a symbol of the **Sun of Justice**, Our Lord Jesus Christ. At Fatima, Our Lady always appeared at the **noon** hour, an hour of great significance, since it is the time in which Our Lord was actually crucified and hung on the Cross. The noon hour may also indicate how much time is left before *the world's* sunset. That Sr. Lucia died 40 minutes before sunset, on February 13, 2005—in the Hebrew month of Adar—is another sign. [435]

On October 13th, the day of the Miracle of the Sun, witnesses stated that Our Lady appeared exactly at **solar noon**—not by the clock's time but by the sun's time. [436] Both the adjusted Gregorian calendar dates and the time of the Virgin's appearances at solar noon prove that **heaven acknowledged Pope Gregory's authority** in the calendar reform. This acknowledgement also underscores the pope's authority, as the Vicar of Christ, to command the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. That heaven acknowledged the Gregorian calendar is also proven by the next fact.

- Centuries earlier, on May 13, 1391 (before the Gregorian reform of the calendar) Pope Boniface IX (reigning 1389-1404) acquiesced to the request of King John I of Portugal and ordered that all Portuguese cathedrals should be named in honor of the Virgin. [437] On August 13, 1385, the Virgin had previously answered the King's prayer, made at Fatima, for his smaller army to reign victorious against a much larger force; now the King wished to further honor the Virgin throughout all of Portugal. [438]

Correlation: Exactly 526 years later, the Virgin first appeared at

Fatima on May 13, 1917—on the "new" May 13 of the Gregorian calendar. Coincidentally, the length of time in years between these two events (526) equals "13" when the numbers are added as individual digits (i.e., 5+2+6=13).

- May 13 was also the Feast of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. [\[439\]](#) This salutary title of the Blessed Mother's became more well-known due to St. Peter Julian Eymard and a mission given to him by the Virgin Mary. She made him aware that no religious order was named in honor of her Divine Son's Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. With the encouragement of Pope Pius IX, the saint founded the Congregation of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Paris, France on May 13, 1856. In 1921, the Sacred Congregation of Rites authorized May 13 as the annual solemn commemoration of *The Feast of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament*.

Correlation: Before Our Lady appeared at Fatima, the children were granted visions of an angel who taught them special prayers of adoration and supplication to the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Sacrament.

- October 13 (the day of the wondrous yet terrifying Miracle of the Sun in 1917) is believed by many scholars to be the actual date of St. Peter's martyrdom in Rome under the tyrant Nero, who is unquestionably a figure-type of the anti-Christ. The date's conclusion is based on the detailed research of Margherita Guarducci (+1999), a remarkable epigraphologist and archeologist, who participated in the study of excavations which were ordered by Pope Pius XII on June 28, 1939.

It was Guarducci who first realized that certain bones found were those of Peter, the first Pope; she was also the first to establish October 13, 64 A.D. as the date of the martyred saint's crucifixion. In 1960, her outstanding book, *The Tomb of St. Peter*, was translated into English and published. Eight years later, another of her written works, "The Date of Peter's Martyrdom," was published in Naples (in the original Italian) in *Words from the Past* in the *Antiquity Studies Review*, No. 267. That latter work was summarized in 1996 by Giovanni Ricciardi and published in "30 Days" magazine, Issue No. 3. For the purposes of this book, the following excerpts of Ricciardi's synopsis of Guarducci's 1968 work are included:

"The most authoritative text informing us of Peter's martyrdom in Rome is the first letter of Saint Clement the Roman to the Corinthians, generally dated at about 96 AD. In its turn, Clement's letter cannot be read apart from one famed passage of Tacitus' 'Annales' (XV, 38-45), in which

the historian speaks of the famous fire that flared in Rome on the night of July 18-19, 64 and of its consequences. A comparison of these two testimonies seems to show that Peter was martyred during the anti-Christian persecution campaign unleashed by Nero after the fire and that the place of his martyrdom was the Vatican's 'horti.' The information Tacitus provides is undoubtedly very authoritative because the author of the 'Annales' was writing not long after the events and he was able to quote eyewitnesses as well as from first-hand documents, such as the 'Acta senatus' and the 'Acta diurna'—respectively the minutes of Senate sessions and the official diaries of the Roman State.

“According to Tacitus, then, the Christians whom he—as others do—describes as a ‘considerable multitude’ (‘multitudo ingens’), were condemned to death not so much for causing the fire but because they were guilty of **‘hatred towards the human race’** (‘odium human,’ generic). This was **a serious charge because the identification of the human race with the empire itself meant that anyone so charged was considered an enemy of the empire.**”

(**Author’s Note:** In 1996, when Ricciardi wrote this summation of Guarducci’s written research, it could not be foreseen that before 20 years had passed, the term **“hate crime”** would be coined and hurled by liberals of all types against Catholics who loyally adhere to Christ and His Church’s traditional doctrines, dogmas, articles of faith, and traditional views on moral issues; this malevolent phrase is also used against anyone who holds to “old-fashioned” values. Shockingly, the term “hate crime” appears to be a modern-day resurrection of Nero’s false judgment against the early Catholics of “hatred towards the human race,” which resulted in the subsequent penalty of a cruel death.)

To continue: “The execution of the condemned, according to Tacitus’ information, took place during grandiose circus spectacles (‘circense ludicrum’), for which Nero made available his own circus in the Vatican that was the principal adornment of his ‘horti.’ It is true, too, that the Vatican circus would have been a natural choice since, after the fire, it was the only area left in Rome for the kind of spectacle Nero desired. In fact, the Circus Maximus—the usual venue for Rome’s ‘circensia ludrica’—could not be used because of fire damage.

“Tacitus goes on to add an interesting detail: Nero himself honored the Vatican spectacles with his presence, mixing with the crowd disguised as a

chariot driver and racing around the circus track. The spectacles lasted for several days. The question now was establishing exactly when they were held.”

As for the month of October in the year 64 (A.D.):

“Tacitus has no hesitation in establishing the year 64 for these events. If we look at the series of events the historian lists as having happened between the fire of Rome (July 18-19) and the end of the year, we can establish that the Vatican spectacles took place in the first half of October. Nor is it difficult to prove that between the end of 64 and Nero's death on June 9, 68 [A.D.], there are no other periods in which there was anti-Christian persecution of the type that Tacitus and Clement describe. It is also useful to note that the period between the end of September 66 [A.D.] and the beginning of 68 [A.D.] can be excluded without doubt since that was the period of Nero's travels in Greece.

“But, confirming the dating proposed for the circus spectacles and, therefore, for Peter's martyrdom, are two other important, anonymous, texts in Greek contained in a papyrus conserved in Vienna today. They are the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. I believe that these texts (belonging to the so-called ‘apocraphal literature,’ a very common category between the end of the first century and the first half of the second which used prophetic and symbolic language to interpret historical events of the time) are so well informed on the history of the Neronian period that they must have been written not long after events in 64 (not after the year 80, perhaps). I also believe that they are the fruit of the same Judeo-Christian environment. After addressing Nero's infamies, the authors of the two texts announce his punishment as imminent. According to the author of the *Apocalypse* [of Peter], **it would be none other than Peter's martyrdom that would mark the beginning of the emperor's end.** This statement is echoed in the *Ascension* [of Isaiah] text which affirms that Nero's kingdom would last for ‘three years, seven months and 27 days’ after the apostle's death. If we calculate three years, seven months and 27 days from Nero's death (June 9, 68), we arrive at the year 64 [A.D.] and October 13 to be precise: this date falls perfectly within the period in which, according to the Tacitus passage, we have set the unleashing of Nero's persecutions.”

On Nero's *dies imperii*

“The date calculated chronologically three years, seven months and 27

days after Nero's death is confirmed by another decisive point. October 13 was not just any ordinary day. It was the anniversary of Nero's ascent to the throne, his *dies imperii*. Moreover October 13, 64 [A.D.] was the tenth anniversary of his reign (*decennalia*, October 13, 54/October 13, 64).

“The *dies imperii* was an important date in the Romans' official calendar at the time of the empire. Numerous sources certify that between the first and fourth centuries, it was celebrated more or less solemnly with sacrifices, feasts, contests and donations to the public by the emperor. Regular features of these festivities were sacrifices and exhibitions of bloodletting according to the ancient belief that bloodshed was to the advantage of the living. In fact, it has been pointed out that in Rome the most important feasts concerning the person of the emperor—birthdays (*dies natalis*) for example, and anniversaries of his ascent to the throne—often coincided with exhibitions of bloodletting, gladiator fights, displays of the condemned (*venationes*). It has also been noted that it was on the occasion of these anniversaries that Jews and Christians would often be sacrificed. Thus for example, Jews of Alexandria were sacrificed on Caligula's *dies natalis*. Saint Polycarp's martyrdom coincides with the *dies imperii* of Antoninus Pius and that of the Christians of Lyons with the *dies imperii* of Marcus Aurelius. It is highly likely, then, that the Emperor Nero, who loved manifestations to be as spectacular as possible, would have promoted cruel spectacles for his *decennalia* (a feast when, in the person of the emperor made a god, the majesty of the Roman Empire was exalted). It is highly likely that he would have organized the execution of Christians who were already condemned on charges of being enemies of the empire.

“From a study of this whole series of testimonies, we can draw two significant conclusions. Firstly the hypothesis, founded on Tacitus' testimony that Nero's persecution in which Peter also suffered martyrdom happened in October 64, is confirmed. Secondly, it appears extremely likely that we must set the date of the martyrdom of the Prince of the Apostles at October 13 that year.”

In addition, there is the following and alarming observation made by Margherita Guarducci in her book, *The Tomb of St. Peter*, wherein she noted “a singular coincidence” that she discovered in the two apocryphal works, the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*:

“This latter work deals with the Emperor Nero. In language which is symbolic but sufficiently clear, **he is portrayed as possessed by the devil**

and resolved to persecute the Twelve Apostles of Christ, one of whom (Peter) will eventually fall into his hands. There are other allusions to the misdeeds suggested by Lucifer to the Emperor, and finally two little sentences appear, little for sure, but how precious! I quote them from the French translation of the Ethiopian text, given by Cardinal Eugene Tisserant:

‘And he will set up his image in the sight of all the cities. And he will rule for three years, seven months and twenty-seven days.’

“What could be the meaning of this particular indication of three years, seven months and twenty-seven days?” Guarducci rhetorically asks, and she answers: “The images set up in every city are certainly the statues of the Emperor customarily erected in the various cities of the Empire.”

Then came Guarducci’s surprising yet reasonable conclusion: “And so the *Ascension of Isaiah* led me back to the first half of October 64 [A.D.], the very same when, according to my other research, the Vatican spectacle and Peter’s martyrdom would have taken place. **But what is the significance of this date of October 13, which is presented as the day of the Apostle’s martyrdom?** In the other prophetic book, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, this martyrdom is regarded as the beginning of the ruin of Nero. ‘There we have it,’ I said to myself, ‘the beginning and the end of the three year, seven month and twenty-seven day period of calamities! It opens with the martyrdom of Peter, the culminating point of the persecution, and closes with the death of the tyrant.’”

Correlation: October 13 was the day of the final apparition at Fatima, Portugal. It was the day on which occurred the Miracle of the Sun in 1917 and, as we have seen, there is good cause to believe it is also the anniversary of the first Pope’s martyrdom, which an innumerable number of faithful also suffered with him on that same day in the year of Our Lord 64. In the “Great Secret” given to the children on July 13, 1917, the Third Secret’s Vision revealed a half-ruined city (which might be Rome), the bodies of the dead, the souls for whom “a bishop dressed in white” prayed as he made his halting, painful way, the death (by gunshots and arrows) of the Holy Father (who may or may not be the same bishop dressed in white), and a countless number of people who are killed in the same manner as the Holy Father.

Thus we recognize themes in regard to the 13th:

First, May 13 reinforces the dogma of the “hidden Jesus,” as the Fatima children called the True Presence of Jesus—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity

–in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

Second, May 13 signifies Our Lady as Queen of Angels *and* of Martyrs, underlining the Virgin's prophecies at Fatima *if she is not heeded*, especially that **“the good will be martyred.”**

Third, this is also seen with the date of October 13, which is the likely date of Pope St. Peter's martyrdom (as well as the many faithful), under the Emperor Nero, one of the most infamous, historical figure-types of anti-Christ, the son of perdition. In sum, the 13th day stresses great charity (in prayer, sacrifice, and action) to the Triune God and for one's neighbor –which sums up the Two Great Commandments.

Finally, the history of May 13, in relation to the Gregorian calendar and heaven's acknowledgement of it, reinforces the pope's special prerogatives, not only as bishop of Rome but as the reigning Supreme Pontiff of Christ's kingdom on earth, the Catholic Church.

Five Scourges, Five Blasphemies, Five First Saturdays

Since “the very nature of true prophecy is that it unerringly predicts what comes to pass,” [\[440\]](#) we must also recall that authentic prophecy from God is given for our edification and instruction. As St. Paul taught, we must “despise not prophecy, but prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” [\[441\]](#) The Church found Fatima “worthy of belief,” [\[442\]](#) and its prophecies have proven true. Therefore, we must hold fast to the requests the Mother of God made at Fatima, and despise not the prophecies she gave to the Church.

Too, we cannot forget Our Lady foretold that, if her requests were ignored—a circumstance that could only happen due to the hierarchy's dismissal of them—five scourges would afflict the world. The first three of the following five sufferings have *unquestionably* occurred:

1. Russia will spread her errors throughout the world.
2. A second and worse war, which will begin during the reign of Pius XI (World War II).
3. The good will be martyred.
4. Persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.
5. The annihilation of nations.

The five points above are one example of how, for a mysterious reason, the number “five” plays an important role of the Fatima Message. To illustrate, Our Lady of Fatima first appeared in May, which is the fifth month of the year. May 13, 1981 marked the assassination attempt against

Pope John Paul II, a terrible example of the hatred held against the Church and her Vicar. The pope attributed Our Lady of Fatima's intercession for saving his life, an admission that "definitively removed the Fatima apparitions from the so-called 'private revelation' by a series of papal acts." [443] In the fifth year of the new century, first Sr. Lucia and then Pope John Paul II passed away, and Pope Benedict XVI (now Bishop Emeritus of Rome who may be, as we shall see, the "bishop dressed in white" of the Third Secret Vision) ascended the chair of Peter.

In sum, Our Lady asked or showed she wanted five things of all the faithful: prayers of the daily Rosary (with each mystery containing five decades), the wearing of the Brown Scapular, the faithful accomplishment of daily duty as Catholics and in our states of life, sacrifice for sinners, and the Five First Saturdays. Specific to the Holy Father, she asked that he command and lead the collegial consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

On the night of May 29-30, 1930, Our Lord revealed to Sr. Lucia five reasons for the Five First Saturdays of Reparation:

"My daughter, the reason is simple. There are five kinds of offenses and blasphemies uttered against the Immaculate Heart of Mary:

- "Blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception."
- "Blasphemies against Her perpetual Virginity."
- "Blasphemies against Her divine Maternity, while refusing at the same time to recognize Her as Mother of men."
- "The blasphemies of those who publicly seek to place in the hearts of children indifference or scorn, or even hatred towards this Immaculate Mother."
- "The offenses of those who outrage her directly in her holy images."

[444]

Two Means to Save the Church Militant

Exactly sixty-eight years before (May 30, 1862), St. John Bosco related his incredible dream, noted as "The Two Columns in the Sea," [445] in which frequent Communion and Marian devotion are the Church's pillars and to which the Barque of Peter—after many battles and much confusion—securely ties itself.

In his dream, the details of which should not be glossed over, St. Bosco stood on an isolated rock, unable to see any other patch of land other than under his feet. From this spot, he saw "a vast sheet of water" with "an

innumerable fleet of ships in battle array. The prows of the ships are formed into sharp, spear-like points so that, wherever they are thrust, they pierce and completely destroy. These ships are armed with cannons, with lots of rifles, with incendiary materials, with other arms of all kinds, and also with *books*, and they advance against a ship very much bigger and higher than themselves and try to dash against it with the prows or burn it or in some way to do it every possible harm.”

“As escorts to the majestic, fully equipped ship, there are many smaller ships, which receive commands by signal from it, and carry out movements to defend themselves from the opposing fleet.”

In the sea’s midst stood “two mighty columns of great height.” Upon the taller pillar rested a Host of great size, the “Salvation of the Faithful,” and upon the shorter one stood a statue of the Immaculate Virgin, “Help of Christians.” The saint also related, “The Supreme commander on the big ship is the Sovereign Pontiff.”

After the pontiff calls a council, the captains of the smaller ships board his vessel and hold a meeting, but “the wind and the waves gather in storm, so they are sent back to control their own ships. There comes a short lull; for a second time, the pope gathers the captains together around him, while the flag-ship goes on its course. But the frightful storm returns. The pope stands at the helm and all his energies are directed to steering the ship toward those two columns, from the top of which and from every side of which are hanging numerous anchors and big hooks, fastened to chains.”

The great ship’s adversaries maintain a relentless battle to stop and sink the great ship. At times, the great ship suffers “large, deep gaps in its side,” but “a gentle breeze blows from the two columns and the cracks close up and the gaps are stopped immediately.” The enemies’ weapons are blown up or broken, and many of their ships shatter or sink. “Then, the frenzied enemies strive to fight, hand-to-hand, with fists, with blows, with blasphemy and with curses.”

“All at once, the pope falls gravely wounded. Immediately those who are with him run to help him and they lift him up. A second time the pope is struck; he falls again and dies. A shout of victory and of joy rings out amongst the enemies; from their ships an unspeakable mockery arises. But hardly is the Pontiff dead than another pope takes his place. The pilots, having met together, have elected the pope so promptly that the news of the death of the pope coincides with the news of the election of the new

successor.”

It is the immediately-elected pope who puts the enemies to route and “guides the ship right up to the two columns and comes to rest between them,” securely fastening the barque—first to the pillar of the Host and then to the pillar of the Virgin.

St. John Bosco asked Fr. Rua, one of his fellow priests, his opinion of the dream. Fr. Rua responded, “It seems to me that the pope’s ship might mean the Church; of which he is the head; the ships, men; the sea, this world. Those who defend the big ship are the good, lovingly attached to the Holy See; the others are her enemies, who try with every kind of weapon to annihilate her. The two columns of salvation seem to be devotion to Mary Most Holy and to the Blessed Sacrament and the Eucharist.”

“You are right!” said St. Bosco. “Only I ought to correct one expression. The enemy ships are persecutions. The most serious trials for the Church are near at hand. That which has been so far is almost nothing in the face of that which must befall. Her enemies are represented by the ships that tried to sink the principal ship if they could. **Only two means are left to save her amidst so much confusion: DEVOTION TO MARY MOST HOLY and FREQUENT COMMUNION**, making use of every means and doing our best to practice them and having them practiced everywhere and by everybody.”

Next to consider is Fatima’s Third Secret Vision, wherein “the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersion in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.” [\[446\]](#)

The fate of a future pope was also related by none other than Pope St. Pius X: “I saw one of my successors **by name** fleeing over the corpses of his brethren. He will flee to a place for a short respite where he is unknown; but he himself will die a cruel death.” [\[447\]](#)

In the Third Secret Vision, the pope walks “half trembling and with

halting step,” indicating advanced age. As for Pope St. Pius X’s vision, it may be that a future pope will take the name of Pius, but there is another consideration: Pope St. Pius X’s baptismal name was Giuseppe Sarto; in Italian, Giuseppe means *Joseph*—the baptismal name of Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI and, after abdicating the papal throne, is now Bishop Emeritus of Rome—a bishop who dresses in white.

Revealing Remarks about the Third Secret and the Consecration

Comparing what is known of the public Fatima revelations to the visions of two great saints, at least three themes appear: the Holy Eucharist and Marian devotion; increasing persecutions of the Church and the Holy Father, with the last one likened to hand-to-hand combat; and a pope’s death at the hand of enemies. Current world circumstances—including an elderly bishop, who resigned from the papal office but appears as “a bishop dressed in white” and whose baptismal name is Joseph—are additional indicators that we are now in the final stages leading to Fatima’s Third Secret Vision.

What we can reasonably conclude about the Third Secret *Message*, still undisclosed, issues from commentary by Sr. Lucia and others in a position to know:

Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (the future **Pope Pius XII**), who was the Vatican Secretary of State in 1931 when he wrote the following in a letter (published in *Pie XII Devant L'Histoire*, pp. 52-53): “I am worried by the Blessed Virgin Mary’s messages to Lucia of Fatima. This persistence of Mary about the dangers which menace the Church is a divine warning against the suicide of altering the Faith, in her liturgy, her theology, and her soul.” Note that there is nothing in any **known** part of the Great Secret addressing these themes, and yet the Vatican Secretary of State said his concerns came from the Virgin’s messages to Lucia, and that Our Lady was persistent “about the dangers which menace the Church,” etc. His words reiterate what is now known of the Fatima history: Sr. Lucia was still acting as Heaven’s messenger, and the message was urgent.

Pope John Paul II, 1980: “Given the seriousness of the contents, my predecessors in the Petrine office diplomatically preferred to postpone publication so as not to encourage the world power of Communism to make certain moves. On the other hand, it should be sufficient for all Christians to know this: *if there is a message in which it is written that the oceans will flood whole areas of the earth, and that from one moment to the next*

millions of people will perish, [448] truly the publication of such a message is no longer something to be desired...”

“We must prepare ourselves to suffer great trials before long, such as will demand of us a disposition to give up even life, and a total dedication to Christ...With your prayer and my prayer, it is possible to mitigate this tribulation, but it is no longer possible to avert it, because only thus can the Church be effectively renewed. How many times has the renewal of the Church sprung from blood? This time, too, it will be otherwise. We must be strong and prepared, and trust in Christ and His Mother, and be very, very assiduous in praying the Rosary.” [449] (**Author’s note:** Of course, it is possible to avert this great trial, by means of the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart.)

Sr. Lucia, May 13, 1980, when asked during an interview, “Has Our Lady ever spoken to you about the consecration of *the world* to her Immaculate Heart?” responded: “No... *Never!* At the Cova da Iria in 1917, Our Lady had promised: *I shall come to ask for the Consecration of Russia...*In 1929, at Tuy, as she had promised, Our Lady came back to tell me that the moment had come to ask the Holy Father for the consecration of that country (Russia).” [450]

Sr. Lucia, March 19, 1983 confirmed in the presence of three witnesses, including the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Portalupi, that Pope John Paul II’s 1982 world consecration did **not** fulfill Our Lady’s request. As reported in an article by Father Pierre Caillon of Centre Saint Jean 61500 Sees, (Orne) France, and which was published by the monthly periodical *Fidelite Catholique* of Auray Cedex, France, Sr. Lucia explained: “In the act of offering of May 13, 1982, Russia did not appear as being the object of the consecration. And each bishop did not organize in his own diocese a public and solemn ceremony of reparation and Consecration of Russia. Pope John Paul II simply renewed the consecration of the world executed by Pius XII on October 31, 1942. From this consecration we can expect some benefits, but not the conversion of Russia.”

Sr. Lucia, March 22, 1984, who had already received and read the text of the pope’s consecration formula planned for March 25, 1984, when asked about it, made a negative sign and declared, “That consecration cannot have a decisive character.” [451]

Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1984, immediately following his “act of offering” the world to Our Lady, said: “**Enlighten especially the peoples of**

which you yourself are awaiting our consecration and confiding.” [\[452\]](#)

These words clearly reveal the pope’s awareness that Russia had neither been explicitly consecrated to the Immaculate Heart nor in the way Our Lady requested.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, late 1984 on why the Third Secret was still not made public: “Because, according to the judgment of the Popes, it adds nothing to what a Christian must know from Revelation – i.e., a radical call for conversion; the absolute importance of history; *the dangers threatening the faith* and the life of the Christian and therefore the world. And also *the importance of the last times*...But the things contained in this Third Secret correspond to what is announced in Scripture and are confirmed by many other Marian apparitions, beginning with the Fatima apparitions themselves in their known contents. Conversion, penance are essential conditions to salvation.” [\[453\]](#)

Cardinal Silvio Oddi, March 17, 1990 said of the Third Secret: “The Blessed Virgin was alerting us against apostasy in the Church.” [\[454\]](#)

Cardinal Luigi Ciappi, 1995, serving for 40 years as papal theologian to all the popes from Popes Pius XII through John Paul II: “In the Third Secret it is foretold, among other things, that the great apostasy in the Church begins at the top.” [\[455\]](#)

Pope Benedict XVI, May 11, 2010: “Beyond this great vision of the suffering of the Pope, which we might in essence attribute to John Paul II, there is indicated that the reality of the future of the Church which will gradually develop and demonstrate itself. Namely, it is true that beyond the moment indicated in [the Third Secret] vision, **it is spoken, it is shown...**” [\[456\]](#) In other words, the former Pope definitely revealed that there are words (“it is spoken”) that accompany the Third Secret Vision (“it is shown”).

The Dogma of the Faith and the Great “Et Cetera”

In 1943, when asked about the contents of The Third Secret, Sr. Lucia said, “In a certain way, I have already revealed it.” [\[457\]](#) How so? In her *Fourth Memoir*, she implicitly disclosed it in a sentence of substantial importance: “**In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, etc.**” [\[458\]](#) This sentence, which ends with the intriguing “et cetera,” is the prelude to the Third Secret Message—the part of the secret still hidden.

“The dogma of the Faith” is a telling phrase, one which addresses the Church’s primary dogma, thrice-defined: “Outside the Church, there is no salvation.” [459] Today, this singular dogma *about* the Church is either unknown or rejected *within* the Church, which is another sign of Fatima’s veracity, lending further credence that the Third Secret’s smothered Message centers on “an apocalyptic crisis of the faith in the Church starting from the top” [460]—namely, the revolt [461] which St. Paul said must come first.

“In” Portugal, Not “Throughout” Portugal

In light of Our Lady’s promise, the faithful are confused by unfolding religious and political events in Portugal, including the desecration of the original, majestic Fatima basilica—accomplished with its rector’s awareness and permission—and the construction of a concrete monstrosity, a “colossal monument dedicated to diabolic disorientation.” [462]

How can such things happen, when Our Lady prophesied, “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, etc.?”

It is because even the faithful have interpreted Our Lady’s opening phrase, “*In* Portugal” to mean “*Throughout* Portugal.” Previously understanding that the sentence indicated apostasy throughout the rest of the world, we now begin to more deeply grasp its meaning: Only *parts* of Portugal will preserve the dogma of the faith, while many other formerly Catholic countries will abandon this foremost dogma—a terrible indictment to how widespread the apostasy has become.

Why is this so? Our Lord revealed to Sr. Lucia certain chastisements of Portugal, previously protected from the ravages of WWII because the country’s bishops collegially consecrated it to the Immaculate Heart in 1931, renewing the act in 1938 and 1940:

“But in spite of this, the Hearts of Our Good Lord and Our Good Mother are sad and grieved. Portugal in its majority does not correspond either to Their graces or love. They [the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary] frequently complain about the sinful life of the majority of the people, even of those who call themselves practical Catholics. But above all, They complain very much about the lukewarm, indifferent and extremely comfortable life of the majority of the priests and members of religious congregations.”

“The number of souls He meets through sacrifice and intimate life of love is extremely small and limited. These confidences lacerate my heart,

mainly because I am one of those unfaithful souls. Our Lord doesn't restrain Himself in setting me there, showing me the mountain of my imperfections that I recognize with huge confusion..."

"Nevertheless, Our Lord goes on communicating with my soul. He seems concerned about the destiny of some countries and wishes to save Portugal, but she is guilty, too." [\[463\]](#)

This revelation is a startling testimony to the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. It reminds us of a previous declaration of the universal Church, "The times in which we live demand action—but action which consists entirely in observing with fidelity and zeal the divine laws and the precepts of the Church, in the frank and open profession of religion, in the exercise of every kind of charitable works, without regard to self-interest or worldly advantage." [\[464\]](#)

The entire Church Militant must follow Our Lady's five requests. The Holy Father and the bishops must effect the solemn, public consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, and all must respond to the other four requests, recalling that "the Church is built of living stones. It is built of saints. And saints are made only by the grace of God and the infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost, not by speeches and publicity and campaigns, which are all doomed to sterility without the essentials of **prayer and sacrifice.**" [\[465\]](#)

PART 13

Our Lady of Akita and the Third Secret of Fatima

“...it is necessary for each one of us to begin to reform himself spiritually. Each person must not only save his own soul but also the souls that God has placed on our path.”

–*Sr. Lucia of Fatima*

Cardinal Ratzinger (now Bishop Emeritus of Rome) once made an astonishing remark that the messages of Fatima and Akita “are essentially the same.” [\[466\]](#) It was not the first time that someone in a position to know provided such crucial hints. By examining certain aspects concerning the Fatima and Akita revelations, we will find abundant proof that the entire message of Fatima—especially the Third Secret Message, a text still concealed by the Vatican—is of universal and apocalyptic proportion.

Foremost amongst the proofs are the prudent but urgent disclosures of Sr. Lucia. Refusing to disclose the Third Secret on her own authority, in various ways she pointed to an unimaginable crisis for the Church and the world. On two different occasions, Lucia’s response intimated the Third Secret’s connection to Divine Revelation when she stated it was in the *Gospel* and the *Apocalypse*—“Read them!” [\[467\]](#)

In another encounter, she was unexpectedly open about the Third Secret’s contents when she specified chapters 8-13 of the *Apocalypse*. Three years before the Third Secret’s anticipated 1960 release, Lucia was consulted by Father Augustin Fuentes, postulator of the causes for beatification of Francisco and Jacinta, who later published a report of this candid interview with “every guarantee of authenticity and episcopal approval, including that of the Bishop of Fatima.” [\[468\]](#) In this revealing interview, Sister Lucia introduced new concepts that can only be the essence of the Third Secret, even as she recalled “the essence” of the First and Second Secrets. [\[469\]](#)

“This is the third part of the Message of Our Lady, which will remain secret until 1960,” Lucia concluded after frankly remarking, “Father, how much time is there before 1960 arrives? It will be very sad for everyone, not one person will rejoice at all if beforehand the world does not pray and do penance. I am not able to give any other details because it is still a secret.”

Lucia also spoke of Our Lady’s sadness “because no one has paid any

attention to her Message, neither the good nor the bad. The good continue on their way but without giving any importance to her Message. The bad, not seeing the punishment of God actually falling upon them, continue their life of sin without even caring about the message. But believe me, Father, God will chastise the world and this will be in a terrible manner. The punishment from Heaven is imminent.” [470]

During the interview, Sr. Lucia mentioned *worldwide* but conditional scourges, both spiritual and material, due to mankind’s constant offenses against God: the annihilation of nations, a diabolical attack on consecrated souls which also affects the laity, and the grave danger of the eternal loss of souls due to obstinate sins. “Tell them, Father,” said Lucia, “that **many times** the Most Holy Virgin told my cousins Francisco and Jacinta, as well as myself, that *many nations will disappear from the face of the earth*. She said that Russia will be the instrument of chastisement chosen by Heaven to punish the whole world if we do not beforehand obtain the conversion of that poor nation.” [471]

Lucia made mention of “the fall of religious and priestly souls,” which so afflict the Hearts of Jesus and Mary: “The devil wishes to *take possession of consecrated souls*. He tries to corrupt them in order to lull to sleep the souls of laypeople and thereby lead them to final impenitence. He employs all tricks, even going so far as to suggest the delay of entrance into religious life. Resulting from this is the *sterility of the interior life*, and among the laypeople, coldness regarding the subject of renouncing pleasures and the total dedication of themselves to God.” [472]

The Cause of Our Lady’s Sadness

Again Lucia mentioned Our Lady’s sadness, which was the reason behind the great sacrifices of her cousins Francisco and Jacinta, “because in all the apparitions of the Most Holy Virgin, they always saw her very sad. She never smiled at us. This sadness, this anguish which we noted in her, penetrated our souls. This sadness is caused by the offenses against God and the punishments which menace sinners...The other thing which sanctified these children was to see the vision of hell.”

“Father, that is why my mission is not to indicate to the world *the material punishments which are certain to come* if the world does not pray and do penance beforehand. **No**, my mission is to indicate to *everyone* the *imminent danger we are in of losing our souls for all eternity* if we remain obstinate in sin.” [473]

Lucia spoke of the dire need for each soul's spiritual reform and conversion. She urged that "we should not wait for an appeal to the world to come from Rome" to do penance. We should not wait for a call to penance from the Holy Father, the bishops, or religious congregations because "Our Lord has already very often used these means and the world has not paid attention. That is why now, **it is necessary for each one of us to begin to reform himself spiritually. Each person must not only save his own soul but also the souls that God has placed on our path...**The devil does all in his power to distract us and to take away from us the love of prayer; we shall be saved together or we shall be damned together." [\[474\]](#)

Near the end of the interview, Lucia spoke of "the last times of the world," saying, "Father, the Most Holy Virgin did not tell me that we are in the last times of the world but she made me understand this for three reasons." As will be seen, these three reasons correspond with certain remarks made 27 years later by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger when he was asked why, in 1984, the Third Secret had still not been made public.

Although he appeared to dismiss its importance, he encapsulated its essence by connecting it to Divine Revelation: "Because, according to the judgment of the Popes, it adds nothing to what a Christian must know from Revelation—i.e., a radical call for conversion; *the absolute importance of history; the dangers threatening the faith and the life of the Christian and therefore the world.* And also *the importance of the last times...* But the things contained in this Third Secret correspond to what is announced in Scripture and are confirmed by many other Marian apparitions, beginning with the Fatima apparitions in their known contents. Conversion and penance are essential conditions to salvation." [\[475\]](#)

What are the three reasons that made Lucia understand we are in the last times?

"The first reason," said Lucia, "is because she told me that the devil is in the mood for engaging in a decisive battle against the Virgin. And a decisive battle is the final battle where one side will be victorious and the other side will suffer defeat. Hence from now on we must choose sides. Either we are for God or we are for the devil. There is no other possibility."

"The second reason is because she said to my cousins as well as to myself that God is giving two last remedies to the world. These are the Holy Rosary and the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These are the last two remedies which signify that there will be no others."

“The third reason is because in the plans of Divine Providence, God always, before He is about to chastise the world, exhausts all other remedies. Now, when He sees that the world pays no attention whatsoever then, as we say in our imperfect manner of speaking, He offers us, with a certain trepidation, the last means of salvation, His Most Holy Mother. It is with a certain trepidation because if you despise and repulse this ultimate means, we will not have any more forgiveness from Heaven because we will have committed a sin which the *Gospel* calls the sin against the Holy Spirit. This sin consists of openly rejecting, with full knowledge and consent, the salvation which He offers.”

"Let us remember that Jesus Christ is a very good Son and that He does not permit that we offend and despise His Most Holy Mother. We have recorded through many centuries of Church history the obvious testimony which demonstrates, by the terrible chastisements which have befallen those who have attacked the honor of His Most Holy Mother, how Our Lord Jesus Christ has always defended the honor of His Mother.”

Finally, Lucia emphasized that “the two means to save the world are prayer and sacrifice,” another reference to the spiritual efforts of individual souls as well as to the prayers and the Sacrifice of the Mass. Implicitly underlining the doctrine of Mary as Mediatrix of All Graces, Lucia stated, “Look, Father, the Most Holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary...There is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary. With the Holy Rosary, we will save ourselves. We will sanctify ourselves. We will console Our Lord and obtain the salvation of many souls.”
[\[476\]](#)

Further Hints of the Third Secret Message

On February 8, 1960 (coincidentally or not, the date then commemorated the Feast of the Most Pure Heart of Mary) [\[477\]](#) the Portuguese news agency, A.N.I. [\[478\]](#) at Rome, released a communiqué from anonymous Vatican sources who declared “the Secret of Fatima will never be disclosed” and “that it is most likely that *the letter* will never be opened, in which Sister Lucia wrote down ***the words*** which Our Lady confided as a secret to the three little shepherds in the Cova da Iria.” [\[479\]](#) This announcement verifies that the Third Secret is not only a Vision but also includes a Message (“***the words*** which Our Lady confided”). It is also indicative of an internal Church struggle, already existing, since no Vatican source publicly assumed authority

for the statement or ever denied it. Still, the Vatican silently confirmed A.N.I.'s announcement because the Third Secret was not released in 1960.

Within the course of the 12 years following 1960, various remarks (of which the following are a mere handful) made by Sr. Lucia and others provide further insights into the Third Secret (with all emphasis below mine):

- Sr. Lucia would emphasize, “We must pray a great deal and **beg God** not to chastise us and **save us in time and for eternity.**” [480] She would also write “many times to reliable witnesses of a ‘**diabolical disorientation**’ in the Church and the world of which Our Lady warned her.” [481]

- Pope Paul VI would lament, “Through some crack, the smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God.” [482]

- Bishop Venancio, the bishop of Leira-Fatima, would issue a pastoral letter for the July 1966 Fatima Jubilee, alluding to “*a Church...continually threatened by the mystery of iniquity ‘which is already at work.’* (II Thess. 2, 7)” [483]

- Providing astute commentary on the Third Secret Message, which opens with Our Lady’s words, “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, etc.,” Fr. Joaquin Alonso, official Fatima archivist, would say, “The phrase most clearly implies a critical state of Faith...**In the period preceding the great triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, terrible things are going to happen.** These form the content of the third part of the Secret. What are they?”

“If ‘*in Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved,*’” he continued, “...it can be clearly deduced from this that in other parts of the Church these dogmas are going to be obscure or even lost altogether. Thus it is quite possible that in this intermediate period which is in question (after 1960 and before the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary), **the text [of the Third Secret Message] makes concrete references to the crisis of the Faith of the Church and to the negligence of the pastors themselves.**”

“One conclusion does indeed seem to be beyond question: the content of the unpublished part of the Secret does not refer to new wars or political upheavals, but to **happenings of a religious and intra-Church character**, which of their nature are still more grave.” [484]

- At yet another time, Fr. Alonso wrote “...Does the unpublished text speak of concrete [e.g., tangible, actual] circumstances? It is very possible that it speaks not only of a real crisis of the faith in the Church during this in-between period but, like the secret of LaSalette, for example, there are more

concrete references to the **internal struggles of Catholics or to the fall of priests and religious**. Perhaps it even refers to the **failures of the upper hierarchy of the Church**. For that matter, **none of this is foreign to other communications Sister Lucia has had** on this subject.” [\[485\]](#)

From Fatima to Akita:

Part of the Third Secret Revealed

As previously mentioned, Lucia had spoken of the Fatima Virgin’s anguish and sadness “caused by the offenses of God and the punishments which menace sinners.” In 1973, Our Lady would also speak of the cause of her sadness, this time to a nun long afflicted by various illnesses and almost totally deaf, Sister Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa in Akita, Japan: “The demon will be especially implacable against souls consecrated to God. *The thought of the loss of so many souls is the cause of my sadness*. If sins increase in number and gravity, there will be no longer pardon for them.” [\[486\]](#)

After a thorough investigation of eight years by Bishop John Shojiro Ito, the Akita apparitions and events, which center around a three-foot high statue of Our Lady placed in the chapel of the Eucharistic Handmaids of the Sacred Heart, were found to be of supernatural origin. In addition to the messages, the statue perspired, wept tears, and issued blood from its right hand—in total 101 times. This same bishop, who authorized the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Akita, later said, “*The message of Akita is the message of Fatima*.” [\[487\]](#)

What, then, is the Message of Akita? Like Fatima, it is comprised of three distinct parts, but at Akita Our Lady did not impart them as secrets. Like Fatima, each sentence and manifestation reveals profound doctrinal or dogmatic depths, especially in regard to the Mystical Body of Christ. Perhaps most incredible is that Akita’s Third Message is either a part of or central to Fatima’s Third Secret Message.

Our Lady of Akita’s First Message addresses reparation for the sins of men, the True Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and consecration to Jesus through Mary, emphasizing Our Lady’s role as Mediatrix of All Graces. [\[488\]](#)

The Second Message again asks for reparation and refers to Mary as Mediatrix but also mentions “a great chastisement” from the Heavenly Father:

"If you love the Lord, listen to what I have to say to you. It is very important; you will convey it to your superior. Many men in this world afflict

the Lord. I desire souls to console Him to soften the anger of the Heavenly Father. I wish, with my Son, for souls who will repair by their suffering and their poverty for the sinners and ingrates. In order that the world might know His anger, the Heavenly Father is preparing to inflict a great chastisement on all mankind. I have intervened so many times to appease the wrath of the Father. I have prevented the coming of calamities by offering Him the sufferings of the Son on the Cross, His Precious Blood, and beloved souls who console Him forming a cohort of victim souls. Prayer, penance and courageous sacrifices can soften the Father's anger..." [\[489\]](#)

The Third Message of Akita, given on October 13, 1973 (the 56th anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima, Portugal), is tragically compatible with the evidence, already examined, that the last Fatima Secret foretells widespread apostasy throughout the Church and the world, an apostasy centering on "the dogma of the Faith," consequently evoking even greater retributions from God. It also explains why the Vatican refuses to release the text of the Third Secret Message. Even further, Akita's third message simultaneously corresponds with Sr. Lucia's warning, "God will chastise the world and this will be in a terrible manner" as well as Fr. Alonso's thesis, "In the period preceding the great triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, terrible things are going to happen. These form the content of the third part of the Secret."

Thus follows the third Message of Akita:

"As I told you, if men do not repent and better themselves, the Father will inflict a terrible punishment on all humanity. **It will be a punishment greater than the deluge, such as one will never have seen before.** Fire will fall from the sky and wipe out a great part of humanity, the good as well as the bad, sparing neither priests nor faithful. The survivors will find themselves so desolate that they will envy the dead. The only arms that will remain for you will be the Rosary and the Sign left by My Son. Each day recite the prayers of the Rosary. With the Rosary, pray for the Pope, the Bishops, and the Priests."

"The work of the devil will infiltrate even into the Church in such a way that one will see cardinals opposing cardinals, bishops against bishops. The priests who venerate me will be scorned and opposed by their confreres. Churches and altars will be sacked; the Church will be full of those who accept compromises and the demon will press many priests and consecrated souls to leave the service of the Lord."

“Pray very much the prayers of the Rosary. I alone am able to save you from the calamities which approach. **Those who place their confidence in me will be saved.**” [490]

The *opening* lines of the third Akita message directly tie to the oft-overlooked *opening* of Fatima’s Third Secret Vision, wherein Lucia wrote “at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a **flaming sword** in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would **set the world on fire**; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’” [491] As can be seen, the Akita message reinforces the Fatima revelations.

In the Third Secret of Fatima Vision, Our Lady’s *right hand* signifies the great power of her intercession because the angel, while thrice crying the word “Penance,” is already prepared to set the world on fire with the sword of Divine Justice.

At Akita, on July 6, 1973, the statue’s *right hand* issued blood. Before that, on the vigil of the Feast of the Sacred Heart in June, Sister Agnes received a cross-shaped stigmata in her *left hand*, causing her great pain and suffering. (On that same occasion, Sr. Agnes’ guardian angel appeared to her, and taught her a prayer she had never before heard. Later, she would learn it was the “O my Jesus” prayer which Our Lady of Fatima said was to be prayed after every Rosary decade: **“O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those with the greatest need of Thy mercy.”** At that time in Japan, the prayer was not well-known. Through the Akita apparitions, the “Fatima Decade Prayer” spread throughout the country.)

That Sr. Agnes and the chapel statue of the Virgin, now known as Our Lady of Akita, bore similar marks on opposite hands must be a sign of theological implications. Of the blood issuing from the Akita statue’s right hand, Sr. Agnes was told by an angel, “This flowing of blood is significant. It **will** be shed for the conversion of men and in reparation for sins. **To the devotion to the Sacred Heart, add the devotion to the Precious Blood.**” [492] The prophecy that “blood *will* be shed for the conversion of men and in reparation for sins” reveals that the Fatima Virgin’s warning that “good people will be martyred” will continue unabated and most likely increase, culminating in the martyrdoms seen in the Third Secret Vision, when an even

greater massacre of Catholics occurs after “a bishop dressed in white” is killed—all because the Virgin’s simple requests at Fatima remain ignored.

The Hidden, Bitter Star

It cannot be denied that Our Lady of Akita’s description of a fiery, worldwide cataclysm which destroys a large part of humanity literally indicates an apocalyptic chastisement. As we’ve already seen, further lights on the Third Secret and “the seriousness of the contents” were expressed by the late Pope John Paul II who, when speaking to a select group in Fulda, Germany, surprised everyone by describing a devastating and universal deluge, saying, “...it should be sufficient for all Christians to know this: *if there is a message in which it is written that the oceans will flood whole areas of the earth, and that from one moment to the next millions of people will perish*, truly the publication of such a message is no longer something to be desired...” [\[493\]](#)

Consider three things: **1)** The Third Secret *Vision* describes an angel with a flaming sword, **2)** the Akita message warns that “fire will fall from the sky,” **3)** but John Paul II, when asked about the Third Secret, specifically mentioned *flooding*. What could be the cause of **both** worldwide fire and flood? Recalling the movements of the “day star” of the celestial heaven (the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima), and also bearing in mind Lucia’s specificity that the Third Secret can be found in the *Gospel* and the *Apocalypse*, we take into account the following Scriptures:

- “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations by reason of confusion of the **roaring of the sea and of the waves**; Men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. **For the powers of heaven shall be moved...**” [\[494\]](#)

- “And the second angel sounded the trumpet: and as it were a great mountain, **burning with fire**, was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood: And the third part of those creatures died, which had life in the sea, and the third part of the ships was destroyed. And the third angel sounded the trumpet, and **a great star fell from heaven, burning as it were a torch, and it fell on the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters: And the name of the star is called Wormwood**. And the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.” [\[495\]](#)

Too, there exist various prophecies that appear to foretell the onset of a

comet (suggested at Akita), and those which definitely predict a pope's exile (as seen in the Third Secret Vision), of which only two shall here be mentioned:

“A powerful wind will rise in the North carrying heavy fog and the densest dust by divine command, and it will fill their throats and eyes so they will cease their savagery and be stricken with great fear... Before the comet comes, many nations, the good excepted, will be scourged by want and famine... By its tremendous pressure, the comet will force much out of the ocean and flood many countries, causing much want and many plagues. All coastal cities will live in fear, and many of them will be destroyed by tidal waves, and most living creatures will be killed, and even those who escape will die from horrible diseases. For in none of those cities does a person live according to the laws of God.” (St. Hildegard, 12th century) [\[496\]](#)

And the second:

“For seven days, the great star shall be seen,
As if two Suns in the sky should appear.
The big Mastiff (Islamic or Arab powers) shall be howling all night
When the Pontiff shall go into exile.”

–Michel de Nostredame, “Michael of Our Lady” [\[497\]](#)

Although we cannot be certain, an asteroid or comet of great magnitude seems to be the plausible explanation for these prophecies of a devastating star. In Greek, “*aster*” or “*astro*” is etymologically rooted to “*ester*,” calling to mind the Star of Esther on Our Lady of Fatima's dress. Again, this star directs us to *The Book of Esther*, providing “the traces of hidden things.” [\[498\]](#) of Fatima as an annunciation of Divine Revelation as found in the *Gospel* and the *Apocalypse*. It has been mentioned repeatedly that Queen Esther is a great figure type for the Virgin—especially as the Fatima Virgin. However, the main facts bear repeating, since they may indicate another surprising link to the Third Secret.

Once more we will recall that, in the Old Testament of the Hebrew text, Esther's birth name of Hádássah referred to myrtle, a star-shaped flower. The word *myrtle* shares the same etymological root as *myrrh* (“bitter”). [\[499\]](#) The Hebrew text relates that Esther (in Persian, “star”), who became queen of Persia, changed her name to *Hester*, which translates to “hidden star” or “hidden [meaning of the] star.” Together, the various philological traces of Esther's name also indicate “**hidden bitter star**.”

Thus, in addition to all else that it means to the Church, the Star of Esther

may also symbolize the “hidden bitter star” which the *Apocalypse* names as **Wormwood**. If so, it reinforces the Fatima message that the Pope, the bishops and the entire Church must do their duty and heed all of the requests of the Morning Star, who wishes to grant an era of peace to mankind—or soon face the chastisement of God’s avenging star.

In concluding this section, these are the main factors to take into account:

- The revelations of the Sacred Heart at Paray-le-Monial, stressing the necessity of mankind’s repentance and reparation for sin and the Lord’s desire to grant us Divine Mercy rather than chastisement;
- All of the incredible “hidden revelations” inherent in the Star of Esther which adorned the Fatima Virgin’s gown;
- *The Book of Esther* itself, which “centers on secrets and revelations, a plot among nations against one kingdom and the elect, prayer and sacrifice, and the final triumph of the Queen;”
- The themes found in *The Book of Esther* suggest it is a figure type for *The Apocalypse*, reinforcing Sr. Lucia’s statement that the Third Secret of Our Lady of Fatima may be found in the *Gospel* and Chapters 8-13 of *the Apocalypse*. [\[500\]](#)
- Too, there is the Hebrew name for *The Book of Esther* (Megillat Hester), which translates to “revelation [of that which is] hidden” or “hidden revelation” but also “hidden revelation of the star.” Thus, the book’s name is itself an indication that the star on the Fatima Virgin’s gown is another trace to the *Apocalypse*.
- The opening lines describing the Third Secret Vision of Fatima (“an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand”); [\[501\]](#)
- The later prophecy of Our Lady of Akita (“Fire will fall from the sky”); [\[502\]](#)
- And so, “in addition to all else it means to the Church, the Star of Esther may also symbolize the ‘hidden bitter star’ which the *Apocalypse* names as Wormwood.”
- At Fatima, Our Lady made use of the great Star of Heaven (the sun) as a reminder of God’s greatness but also as an image of the end of the world. [\[503\]](#)

In studying the *Apocalypse*’s chapters 6-11, we find it “portrays the great distress among the nations on account of the calamities which the Lamb allows to overtake the world in punishment for unbelief,” as Fr. R. Gerald Culleton explained. “These calamities are in origin *terrestrial* (Ch. 6),

celestial (Ch. 8), and *infernal* (Ch 9). Even a foretaste of hell is given to mankind before the great day of reckoning. Also in St. Luke's eschatological chapter, there is a clear distinction made between ordinary wars and insurrections on the one hand, and **universal war**, calamity, famine, and death on the other. The latter is the sign of the coming judgment. (Lk. 21:9-11)"

He continued, "The period of great distress coincides with the 'Major Apostasy' of 2 *Thess.* 2:3 and with the end of the 'Time of the Gentiles.' After describing the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said: 'And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the nations to be fulfilled.' (Luke 21:24) The great distress brought physical death to many on earth, but like the days of the flood (see 1 Peter 3:20), many found repentance before death and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and an innumerable crowd remained faithful to Him until death (Apoc. 7: 9-14)." [\[504\]](#)

It is no small wonder that the last words of Our Lady on October 13, 1917 were the motherly plea: "Do not offend the Lord our God any longer. He is already deeply offended." At present, the world is already chastised with a terrible terrestrial calamity—the Great Revolt, which still runs its course. Its three historical stages directly link to the reasons Our Lady came to Fatima, the Great Secret's three distinct parts, and the Great Miracle's three-fold dance.

As for the celestial calamity foretold in the *Apocalypse*, it also seems prefigured in the "dancing" Star of Heaven, which advanced and receded *three* times before its final, soul-shaking tumble. The Scriptures are clear that the sun or its light indicate God's Grace, His Presence, His Glory and Justice, or the glory of the just. [\[505\]](#) Symbol of the Sun of Justice, the sun at Fatima was shaken from its heavenly moorings, revolving like "a captive *ball of fire*," suddenly plunging to the very horizon line, and finally "tracing a sort of winding ellipse as it went" back to its zenith—suggesting the path of an asteroid in the heavens. Was the sudden fiery plummet, so like a "wheel of fire," the sensible sign of the *celestial* chastisement of the *Apocalypse's* "bitter" star, Wormwood? Did it portend Our Lady of Akita's warning that came exactly 56 years later to the day, "Fire will fall from the sky..."? [\[506\]](#)

Each of us must make this heartfelt prayer our own: "I must ardently desire to have Him as my Savior, Whom I am unable to withstand as my Judge." [\[507\]](#) The Church [that is, her human element] and the world still have a choice between repenting and asking for God's Mercy or remaining

obstinate in sin and facing His Wrath. Each of us can do our part, following and spreading the whole truth about Fatima and the meaning of its magnificent Miracle. We must pray, sacrifice and work for the happy day of triumph, when Russia is collegially consecrated to the Virgin's Immaculate Heart. Through it all...

“Look to the Star! Call Mary!” (*St. Bernard of Clairvaux*)

-SECTION III-

PART 14

What Pope Benedict XVI Revealed: The Third Secret is Spoken

“In all ages, men have been divinely instructed in matters expedient for the salvation of the elect...and in all ages there have been persons possessed of the spirit of prophesy, not for the purpose of announcing new doctrines, but to direct human actions.”

**-St. Thomas Aquinas,
*Summa Theologica II-II, Q. 174, Art. 6.***

Three simple but remarkable words from Pope Benedict XVI during an in-flight interview reveal that there is more to the Third Secret of Fatima than a startling but inexplicable Vision. A careful examination of the Pope’s response to a question, asked and answered in Italian, show that—not once, but *twice*—the Pope made clear that the Third Secret is also spoken. [\[508\]](#)

Flying en route to Portugal on May 11, 2010, Pope Benedict made a crucial revelation to a group of journalists, the press corps of the papal entourage. As is the usual practice, Vatican protocol asks correspondents who will travel with the Pope to submit their questions *days in advance*. [\[509\]](#)

Of all the inquiries, the Pope chose to answer only three, all of which were formally presented by Vatican spokesman Fr. Frederico Lombardi. On the same day, the complete question-and-answer session (an exchange made and published in Italian) was quickly transcribed by journalist Gian Guido Vecchi for *Corriere della Sera*. [\[510\]](#)

As it turned out, the last of these pre-selected questions was actually a three-part inquiry about the Fatima apparitions and the Third Secret, the last of three distinct parts of “the Great Secret” given by the Virgin Mary to three shepherd children on July 13, 1917.

In comparing the various English renditions of the on-board press conference, one will find a few inaccuracies or mistranslations. To a certain degree, this is understandable, as any translator would attest. On the other hand, some things lost in translation are too important to lose. My research into the original Italian articles discovered that the English translations were askew; as a result, I published the correct translation on my blog because every single journalist, in print or online, had missed something both startling and imperative.

What follows, then, is my *literal* translation [\[511\]](#) from Italian-to-English of the Fatima/Third Secret question and the incredibly relevant section of the Pope's response (all following emphasis mine):

[Author's translation begins]: "Holiness, what significance have we today for the apparitions of Fatima? And when you presented the text of the Third secret (sic), in the Vatican Press Office, in June 2000, it was asked if the Message could be extended ["broadened" or "widened"], beyond the attack on John Paul II, also to the additional [or "other"] sufferings of the *popes*? And is it possible, in your opinion [or "according to you"], to frame also in that vision the sufferings of the Church of today for the sins of the sexual abuse of minors?" [\[512\]](#)

Pope Benedict XVI's Response: "*Beyond this great vision of the suffering of the pope, which we might in essence attribute to John Paul II, there is indicated the reality of the future of the Church which [will] gradually develop and demonstrate [itself]. Namely [also rendered as either "That is" or "In other words"] it is true that beyond the moment indicated in the vision, it is spoken, it is shown [there is] the necessity of the passion of the Church which, naturally [or "of course"], is reflected in the person of the Pope, but the Pope is in the Church, and therefore it is the sufferings of the Church that are announced...*" [\[513\]](#) **[End of author's translation]**

The remainder of this substantial section of the Pope's response to the Third Secret question is as follows, "As for the new things we may find today in this message, it is also that the attacks on the Pope and the Church not always come from the outside, but the sufferings of the Church actually come from *within* the Church, from the sin that exists in the Church. This has always been known, but today we can see it in a really terrifying way: the greatest persecution of the Church does not come from outside enemies, but it is *from sin within the Church*. And the Church now has a deep need to relearn penance, accept purification, learn to forgive, but also a need for justice." [\[514\]](#)

In those preceding words, one discerns a slight echo of Pope St. Pius X in his landmark encyclical, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, on the doctrine of the modernists: "...they put into operation their designs for her undoing, not from without but from within. Hence, the danger is present almost in the very veins and heart of the Church, whose injury is the more certain from the very fact that their knowledge of her is more intimate." [\[515\]](#)

The Third Secret: "It is spoken..."

- **First**, closer attention must be paid to the pivotal sentence: “Namely, it is true that *beyond* the moment indicated in the vision, *it is spoken* (the briefest pause, almost as if the Holy Father caught himself), *it is shown*...” and later in the same sentence he stated “...it is the sufferings of the Church that are *announced*.”

In highlighting that one sentence alone, Pope Benedict XVI made a staggering and critical revelation. In June of 2000, [\[516\]](#) the Vatican released a description of the Third Secret Vision, but not the Virgin’s words that pertain to it.

Since that time, less than a handful of influential Vatican prelates insist there is nothing left to reveal of the Third Secret, evoking a collective, common-sense response from many Catholics: “That’s it?” This includes Mother Angelica, the founder of EWTN (Eternal World Television Network), who, when speaking to a priest on her program on May 16, 2001, said: “As for the Secret [the Third Secret of Fatima], well, I happen to be one of those individuals who thinks we didn’t get the whole thing. I told you! I mean, you have the right to your own opinion, don’t you, Father? There, you know, that’s my opinion. Because I think it [the Third Secret] is scary.”

Then, in May 2010, Pope Benedict XVI submitted a crucial piece of evidence that there is more to the Third Secret, when he unexpectedly admitted that “beyond...the vision...**it [the Third Secret] is spoken.**”

- **Second**, one critical fact cannot be forgotten: Pope Benedict XVI was the first pope to ascend the papal throne, already possessing full knowledge of the Third Secret of Fatima. [\[517\]](#) In light of the fact that Benedict XVI had at least 27 years (if not longer) to ponder the full Third Secret, the manner in which the Pope expressed himself on May 11, 2010 indicates either a purposefully discreet admission or a momentary slip.

To provide a brief summary: During a 1984 interview, Cardinal Ratzinger (who became Pope Benedict XVI in 2005) disclosed that he had already read the Third Secret. However, he did not say when or under what circumstances the Secret was made known to him. It was also in 1984 that Cardinal Ratzinger, when asked why the Third Secret had still not been revealed, provided an amazing six-point summary of its contents, a topic addressed in the next section.

- **Third**, the specific inquiry about the Third Secret initially asked “if the Message could be extended...to the additional sufferings of the *popes*.”

Initially, it should be noted that Pope Benedict did not object to the

plural word, “*popes*.” Moreover, the Holy Father’s reply also reveals that the pope of the Third Secret Vision is not necessarily the late Pope John Paul II: “*Beyond* this great vision of the suffering of the pope, which we *might* in *essence* attribute to John Paul II...”

The entire “Great Secret,” in fact, addresses the role of the Holy Father many times. The papacy is absolutely central to complete the Virgin Mary’s requests to, and on behalf of, the Church. While the Secret concerns (meaning “is of concern to”) the Holy Father, it is not only *about* the Holy Father. These two points are made clear by Our Lady’s words in the Second Fatima Secret, by Heaven’s later and repeated insistence to Sr. Lucia, and, logically, by the hidden text of the Third Secret, which the Virgin wanted revealed to the world no later than 1960.

The “person of the pope,” mentioned by Benedict XVI, means the individual in the office of the papacy, whether past, present, or future. Uncomfortable as it is to admit, the “other sufferings of the popes” is of their own tragic making, due to their purposefully obtuse and tragic refusal to obey the explicit commands of God, given by Our Lady of Fatima.

Furthermore, John Paul II was not the only pope to be victimized by a murderous attack. The Holy Father seen in the Third Secret Vision “is killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him.” [\[518\]](#) Surely, Benedict XVI knew “the attack in 1981 [an assassination attempt made against John Paul II] stands with respect to that vision exactly as the other attempts suffered by popes—for example, the attack on Paul VI on November 27, 1970, when he was stabbed in the abdomen by a lunatic in Manila.” [\[519\]](#) Furthermore, bullets and arrows together were not used against either Paul VI or John Paul II.

Still, even in hindsight, no Vatican prelate attributed the lethal attempt against Paul VI as a fulfillment of the Third Secret, but only to John Paul II. Now Benedict’s recent words refute that interpretation.

- **Fourth**, Pope Benedict XVI never clarified that the Third Secret’s indicated “reality of the future of the Church” is *conditional*, whether for good or for evil.

In accord with Divine Revelation, the Virgin Mary qualified these conditions in the Second Part of “the Great Fatima Secret”: “If what I say to you is done...”–“To prevent this...” *and* “If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace”–*but*, “If not, she [Russia] will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions against

the Church. The good will be martyred. The Holy Father will have much to suffer. Various nations will be annihilated.” [520]

Our Lady’s words, then and later, left no doubt of God’s will. In fact, due to the incomplete 1942 consecration of Russia made by Pope Pius XII, Sr. Lucia “would say more than once, and with deliberate emphasis, **‘What Our Lady wants is that the Pope and all the bishops in the world shall consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart on one special day. If this is done, she will convert Russia and there will be peace. If it is not done, the errors of Russia will spread through every country in the world.’**” [521]

In July 1917, the Mother of God also promised, “In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace [*era of peace*, in another translation] will be granted to the world.” [522] This is ***the Promise*** in which all must keep hope.

As previously mentioned, credible Fatima scholars agree, as would anyone who understands the rules of grammar, that the Promise concludes the Second Secret, and the Third Secret begins with Our Lady’s next sentence, “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, etc.”—the *etc.* added by Sr. Lucia, who indicated that explanatory words followed.

• **Fifth**, Benedict XVI said there is “need for the passion of the Church, which naturally reflects itself on the person of the pope...”

To the contrary, it was precisely to avoid this ongoing passion (beginning anew with the post-WWI era) that Our Lady came to Fatima, there to warn against many future dangers and give the means to avoid them all.

Again, the Virgin at Fatima repeatedly emphasized through her requests and prophecies (especially in the still unexplained but ominous Third Secret Vision) that the present and future are fully dependent upon the Church’s fidelity to Divine Revelation. That fidelity, however, depends on “the person of the pope,” the man whose office is entrusted by God with the duty and obligation to guard the Deposit of Faith and faithfully transmit it to Christ’s flock.

In the words of the great saint, Pope St. Pius X, “One of the primary obligations assigned by Christ to the office divinely committed to Us of feeding the Lord’s flock is that of guarding with the greatest vigilance the deposit of the faith delivered to the saints, rejecting the profane novelties of

words and the gainsaying of knowledge falsely so called.” [523]

Tragically, waning papal vigilance has marked the past decades of Church history. God, Who knows all things, foresaw the failure of those hierarchs who simply would not wholly fulfill all of Heaven’s directives given at Fatima. Part of Lucia’s mission was to transmit God’s commands to the hierarchy, which they in turn were to fulfill for the benefit of the universal Church and the world.

From the beginning, however, her first superior, Bishop de Silva, repeatedly rejected the responsibility of the Third Secret placed upon him. This bishop was given the authority to read and disseminate the Third Secret, but he obstinately refused to do so. [524]

As a result, various misunderstandings and capitulations rippled throughout the hierarchy in regard to many important facets of Fatima. The consecrations of Pope Pius XII, Paul VI, and Pope John Paul II were incomplete; the other popes (Pius XI and John XXIII) did not even make the attempt. Sadly, Benedict XVI also did not attempt the required collegial consecration.

An appropriate observation was made by Antonio Socci, author of *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, who wrote, “All of the history of Fatima and of this century resides in this dramatic incapacity of Peter, of the men of the Church, and of humanity to entrust themselves fully to she who is ‘omnipotent by grace’—the incapacity to trust in her truly and totally, almost as if the possibility of salvation could come from Peter (alone) by his own initiatives, from Vatican politics.”

• **Sixth**, Benedict XVI subsequently remarked, “...but the Pope is in the Church, and therefore it is the sufferings of the Church that are *announced*.” These words accomplish two things: 1) they make a second verification that the Third Secret is indeed spoken, and 2) they express a vital truth of Catholic doctrine regarding the Pope and the Church.

Jesus Christ said to the first pope, “And I say to thee: Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” [525] Since the meaning of individual words is significant, this essay now turns to the connotation of the word “church,” as explained by the Catholic priest and scholar, Msgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton:

“What Our Lord promised, and what He actually accomplished, was thus the continuation of a social unit which had been in existence since the beginnings of the human race, but a continuation of this unit in a new status

and under new conditions. In this new status, the *ecclesia* was to be established or founded upon St. Peter. In other words, this man and his successors were to be the source of the unity and stability of this *ecclesia* of the new dispensation. The society of Our Lord's disciples was the 'Church' of the new dispensation. It was and, until the end of time, it will continue to be the assembly of the chosen people, the people of the covenant, the kingdom of God in this world. By reason of its association with Our Lord, it is designated as His Mystical Body." [\[526\]](#)

With this definition in mind, the entire Church, from the Holy Father to the laity, must recall the great yet terrible "secret of the Catholic City," as it is taught in the infallible Scriptures:

"Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." [\[527\]](#)

THE SIX THEMES OF THE THIRD SECRET OF FATIMA

“We had enough exhortations to be silent. Cry out with a hundred thousand tongues! I see that the world is rotten because of silence.”

–*St. Catherine of Siena*

We have seen how, in choosing to answer a “Third Secret question,” which was really a three-part inquiry, Pope Benedict XVI unexpectedly revealed that the Third Secret consists of both a verbal Message from Our Lady as well as a Vision. In fact, when the Pope said the Third Secret is spoken and shown, his words correlate with other proofs that this last Secret is comprised of *two* parts.

To cite only one example, let us momentarily turn to what was said decades ago by Fr. Joseph Schweigel. This priest, upon his return from an important mission given to him by Pope Pius XII to make inquiries of Sr. Lucia about unfulfilled parts of the Fatima Message (the Third Secret, the consecration of Russia, etc.), was briefly questioned by a curious colleague about the Third Secret. Fr. Schweigel responded in the following manner:

“I cannot reveal anything of what I learned at Fatima concerning the third Secret, but I can say that it has two parts: *one concerns the Pope*. The other, logically—although I can say nothing—would have to be the continuation of the words: *In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved.*” [\[528\]](#)

The colleague pressed a little further, asking, “The present Pope or the next one?” However, as the interrogator himself attested in a written letter, “To this question, Fr. Schweigel made no reply.” [\[529\]](#)

Only a few years later, Fr. Schweigel would also say that the Third Secret “seems to suppose a victorious, triumphant, but difficult and heroic decision” of a Pope’s. [\[530\]](#) In considering the purpose of Fr. Schweigel’s papally-directed mission in questioning Sr. Lucia and in light of the tragic circumstances in which the Church Militant finds itself today, one can reasonably presume that, sometime in the future, a Pope will make a “difficult and heroic decision” under circumstances in which he faces vehement, if not physically violent, opposition to his unique prerogatives in his office as Vicar of Christ when he decides to comply with at least one, if not all, of Our Lady’s unfulfilled requests at Fatima.

Since Our Lady still awaits three particular actions to be made by the

Pope and the bishops of the Catholic Church, it appears that Fr. Schweigel's description of a "victorious, triumphant, but difficult and heroic decision," made by the present Pope or a future one, lends further insight into Our Lady's promise, "In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph."

Because they deserve repeating, what are these three things in which the Queen of the Catholic City so gently insists? Our Lady first asks the Pope to command (not invite) and lead the world's bishops in a public and solemn collegial consecration of *Russia* to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Secondly, the Virgin Mary also desires the release of the complete Third Secret Message (which will then make clear the meaning of the Third Secret Vision). Third, the Pope must promulgate the Five First Saturday devotions, which are acts of reparation for five specific blasphemies against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

What must never be forgotten is that the last Secret of Fatima, like the first Two Secrets, is intended by God to be publicly disseminated to the entire Church and likewise followed, for it also is given for the salvation of souls living in these days of great peril. To insist on the release of the Third Secret and the other two things for which the Virgin Mary asks is neither a matter of satisfying mere curiosity nor is it one of overly sentimental piety; these are matters of obedience to God Himself, Who sent the Immaculate Virgin Mother to Fatima with an apocalyptic warning and the means to avoid its fulfilment.

To grasp the general idea "of what" the Third Secret consists, it is entirely appropriate to attentively review an earlier disclosure by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, made many years before he became the Pope.

It has been previously mentioned that in a 1984 interview with Vittorio Messori, Cardinal Ratzinger was asked if he had read the Third Secret of Fatima. When he answered, "Yes, I have read it," it was then inquired as to why the Secret had still not been released. A careful examination of the Cardinal Ratzinger's answer reveals a total of six "themes" to the Third Secret:

"Because, according to the judgment of the Popes, it adds nothing (literally: "nothing different") to what a Christian must know concerning what derives from Revelation: i.e., a radical call for conversion; the absolute importance of history; the dangers threatening the faith and the life of the Christian, and therefore of the world. And then the importance of the '*novissimi*' [the last events at the end of time]. If it is not made public—at least

for the time being—it is in order to prevent religious prophecy from being mistaken for a quest for the sensational (literally: 'for sensationalism'). But the things contained in this 'Third Secret' correspond to what has been announced in Scripture and has been said again and again in many other Marian apparitions, beginning with the Fatima apparitions in their known contents. Conversion and penitence are the essential conditions for 'salvation.'" [\[531\]](#)

Since Cardinal Ratzinger spoke of the “Novissimi” (the last events at the end of time), one might ask: Could these six themes of the Third Secret direct our attention to one or more of the ‘six signs’ of the last times, given by Christ Himself?

When Our Lord prophesied to His Apostles the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in 69 A.D. but also serves as a figure-type for the end of the world), He said, “These things which you see, the days will come in which there shall not be left a stone upon a stone that shall not be thrown down. And they asked him, saying: Master, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when they shall begin to come to pass? Who said: Take heed you be not seduced; for many will come in my name, saying, I am he; and the time is at hand: go ye not therefore after them. And when you shall hear of wars and seditions, be not terrified: these things must first come to pass; but the end is not yet presently. Then he said to them: **Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be great earthquakes in divers places, and pestilences, and famines, and terrors from heaven; and there shall be great signs.**” [\[532\]](#) Those infallible words of Our Lord’s are the last six events of the end times.

Consider, then, the six themes found in Cardinal Ratzinger’s disclosure about the Third Secret’s contents:

1.) The Third Secret of Fatima adds “nothing different” to what derives from Divine Revelation (of which the two sources are Tradition and Scripture). Of course, this remark might be considered superfluous, because the Church cannot approve any apparition or locution as “worthy of belief” *unless* it is in perfect accord with Divine Revelation. However, if a Church-approved revelation adds “nothing” different from Revelation,” then it must be derived *from either Tradition or Scripture , or both*.

2.) The Third Secret is a “radical” (i.e., a drastic, profound, or extreme) call for conversion and penance. As the Church’s long history proves, whenever God chose to make such a “radical” call through His chosen

prophets, that same call was always intended to be given to His people for their salvation. God's message to a prophet is never solely intended for the prophet alone.

For example, St. John the Evangelist was commanded by God, "What thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven churches..." [533] As we know, the beloved disciple also wrote what he *heard* in that same collection of writings, now known as the *Apocalypse*. This example again reminds us that Sr. Lucia herself said that the Third Secret is in the *Gospel* and the *Apocalypse*.

3.) The Third Secret refers to "the absolute importance of history," which the Church refers to as either "sacred history" or "salvation history." Sacred history centers on two things: The Incarnation of Christ, when Our Lord came to offer Redemption and Mercy to fallen mankind, and His Second Coming, when He will come as Just Judge. Sacred history records the unfolding of events, which depend on mankind's acceptance or rejection of God's Will.

4.) The Third Secret alerts the Church and the world "to the dangers threatening the Faith, the life of the Christian, and therefore the world." What "dangers" are seen in the Third Secret **Vision** that could simultaneously threaten the Faith, a Christian's life, and the entire world? As tragic as the Vision appears to be, the events in the "half-ruined city" (which might be Rome) cannot threaten the entire world—or can they? If so, then *how* so? The missing words of Our Lady are the only explanation for Cardinal Ratzinger's words in 1984. The omitted text of the Virgin's must be about the spiritual and material dangers of "the revolt," foretold by St. Paul, which he said must come first before "the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). Surely, then, the nature of these unknown threats revealed in the Third Secret Message is most grave, since Cardinal Ratzinger appeared to suggest their essence in the next point.

5.) The Third Secret relates "the importance of the *Novissimi*," a theological term with two "simultaneous" definitions: the four "last things" as they pertain to every human soul (death, judgment, heaven, hell) and "the last things" (meaning the last events at the end of time), in which all peoples will witness the Second Coming of Christ, the universal judgment, and the literal ending of the material world. The *Novissimi* could also pertain to the time immediately preceding Christ's Second Coming—the days of the great apostasy, which are then followed by the "son of perdition," the anti-Christ.

As Cardinal Ratzinger used the term in 1984, the Novissimi is not only about each soul's individual death, judgment, and final fate, for that would have no bearing on the importance of salvation history, or the "dangers threatening the Faith, the life of the Christian, and, therefore, the world."

6.) Although it could be mistaken for sensationalism, the Third Secret is a "*religious prophecy* corresponding to Scripture and confirmed by many other Marian apparitions," *beginning* with the Fatima revelations in their "known contents."

This last point is Cardinal Ratzinger's final affirmation that the Third Secret is in accord with Scripture (and also corresponds with Sr. Lucia's declaration, mentioned previously, that the Third Secret is in the *Gospel* and the *Apocalypse*)—but it is also confirmed as well by other "private" Marian revelations, starting with what is already publicly known of Fatima but was not then, in 1984, or later, in 2000, fully revealed. The Cardinal summarized these Church-approved apparitions by stating them in their most basic but essential message: "Conversion and penitence are the essential conditions for salvation."

One may reasonably ask: **Where are seen those six themes in the Third Secret Vision**, the only part of the Third Secret finally released 40 years after its final due date of 1960? Perhaps the fourth theme is represented, but the others are not. Cardinal Ratzinger's words in 1984 confirm that the Secret later revealed in June, 2000 was not the entire Third Secret. Again, the whole of Fatima is complete, from the first message to the Miracle of the Sun. It makes no sense to opine, as some do, that the Mother of God left the third part of the Great Secret unexplained and, as it were, hanging, while expecting the men of the Church to interpret only the Third Secret but not the first Two Secrets. As with the vision of hell, the Virgin must have stated more which completes both the opening sentence of the Third Secret Message, "In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, *etc.*" **and** the Third Secret Vision that opens with an angel and a flaming sword of justice. Let's again consider the description of the Third Secret *Vision*:

"...at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: 'Penance, Penance, Penance!'"

“And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it;’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father.’ Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.”

Finally, of the relatively few Church-approved Marian revelations since the time of Fatima, it must be remembered that it was Cardinal Ratzinger who said that the two messages of Fatima and Akita (with its very serious subject matter, including warnings of an apocalyptic nature) “are essentially the same.” [\[534\]](#)

In considering all that he knows, it is no small wonder that Benedict XVI (who resigned from the papacy in 2013) said on May 13, 2010 (the 93rd anniversary of the first Fatima apparition): “We would be mistaken to think that Fatima’s **prophetic mission** is complete.” [\[535\]](#)

OUR LADY AND THE APOSTLES OF THE LATTER TIMES

“One must strive to maintain a strong spiritual life. If one lacks this, one lacks everything.”

–*St. Vincent de Paul*

The Church will soon observe the 100th anniversary of the 1917 Fatima apparitions, in what we hope shall be a wondrous and universal celebration commemorating the Triumph of Mary’s Immaculate Heart. The year 2029 (only fifteen years hence from the date of this book’s digital publication) will mark the centenary of the day the Virgin returned to say that the moment had come when the Lord God Himself asked the Holy Father to command and lead the consecration of Russia to the Virgin’s Immaculate Heart. Today, however, as the human race descends into a chaos unparalleled in world history, one wonders what the coming years will bring. Are these the times foretold by St. Louis de Montfort, the days which will bring forth “the apostles of the latter times”? [\[536\]](#)

Thirty years after Our Lady gave the Great Secret of Fatima, the Church canonized St. Louis Marie de Montfort, the apostle of “true devotion to Jesus through Mary.” [\[537\]](#) “The mainspring of his apostolic ministry,” as Pope Pius XII said at the canonization, “**his great secret** of attracting and giving souls to Jesus, was his devotion to Mary. All his activity was founded upon her, all his confidence rested in her. In opposition to the joyless austerity, melancholy, fear and depressing pride of Jansenism, he promoted the filial, trustful, ardent and expansive love-in-action of a slave of Mary.” [\[538\]](#)

St. Montfort, now a candidate to be recognized as a Doctor of the Church, authored *True Devotion to Mary*, *The Secret of Mary*, and *The Secret of the Rosary*. Even before his canonization, St. Montfort’s writings positively influenced three popes—Pope Leo XIII, Pope St. Pius X, and Pope Pius XII. In fact, Pope St. Pius X granted an Apostolic Blessing to all who read *True Devotion to Mary*, stating, “There is no surer or easier way than Mary in uniting all men in Christ.” [\[539\]](#)

Parallels: Our Lady of Fatima and St. Louis de Montfort

St. Louis de Montfort “knew that Mary is the *pathway* to her Son, leading souls quickly and securely to Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom.”

[540] In a most striking parallel two hundred years after the saint's death, Our Lady herself said at Fatima, "Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge, and *the path* that leads you to God." [541]

Too, there are other interesting similarities in religious authorities' acceptance or resistance toward St. Montfort's mission and the later Fatima revelations (especially the third part of the Great Secret, the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, and the papal promulgation of the Five First Saturday devotions in reparations for sins of blasphemy against the same Immaculate Heart). For example:

- Modernism, the greatest of all heresies, is the central obstruction to the Fatima Virgin's six requests—the particular cause explaining the resistance against the collegial consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart. Although the modernist heresy has been condemned by many popes (and vehemently so by Pope St. Pius X [542] over 100 years ago), there is still an overwhelming number of people in all states and ranks of life who have embraced it.

Similarly, St. Montfort's "greatest problem was the opposition he encountered from the propagators of the Jansenist heresy...Although Jansenism had been condemned by the Church twice even before St. Louis de Montfort's birth, its teachings continued to spread and to influence people for a century."

- At Fatima, Our Lady prophesied what would happen, dependent upon whether or not her requests were heeded. Ardent promoters and defenders of the whole truth of Fatima are pitted in a constant battle against detractors who either insist that ongoing historical events leading to the Third Secret "now seem a part of the past" [543] or who implicitly persecute Our Lady by casting various doubts upon the witness of Sr. Lucia (now Servant of God), the last Fatima visionary, who died in 2005.

Likewise, St. Montfort during his lifetime was "at once persecuted and venerated everywhere," [544] because his "preaching, his writing and his conversation were all impregnated with prophecy and with anticipations of the later ages of the Church." [545]

- Finally, there exists overwhelming evidence that the Third Secret of Fatima is not yet "fully" released. [546] While the Third Secret *Vision* may now be known (but obfuscated with various interpretations, with none of them binding on the faithful), its accompanying Message, which explains the

Vision, remains buried by Vatican officials who still refuse to obey the Mother of God.

In a similar fashion, St. Montfort prophesied about his treatise, *True Devotion to Mary*, “I clearly foresee that raging brutes will come in fury to tear with their diabolical teeth this little writing and him whom the Holy Ghost has made use of to write it; or at least to envelop it in the silence of a coffer, in order that it may not appear.” [\[547\]](#)

“This prediction was fulfilled to the letter,” explains one of four introductions and prefaces to *True Devotion*. “Throughout the whole 18th century, the spiritual sons of St. Louis de Montfort were persecuted by the Jansenists for their zeal in spreading this devotion; the precious manuscript of de Montfort remained hidden during the troubled times of the French Revolution and was brought to light only in 1842, when it was found in a chest of old books by a Montfort Father.” [\[548\]](#)

For the reasons stated above, it may be no coincidence that only 13 years after St. Montfort’s canonization, the Bishop of Leiria, Msgr. Joao Venancio, blessed and installed a statue of the saint on October 13, 1960 (the 43rd anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun). This statue “now stands above the colonnade of the [original Fatima] basilica,” commemorating the bishop’s appeal to his brother bishops throughout the world, “inviting them to organize days of prayer and penance on October 12 and 13, in union with the pilgrims to the Cova da Iria, in a spirit of reparation and consecration to the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary.” [\[549\]](#)

Mary Forms the Great Saints of the Consummation

In concluding this brief introduction to St. Louis Marie de Montfort, it would be impossible to fully cover his emphasis and devotion to the Incarnation of Christ (which is also the first Rosary mystery, the Annunciation) or his explanations as to why the Virgin Mary is necessary to God’s plan for the salvation of souls. What follows, then, is an “overview” of sorts, illustrating key points of what St. Montfort taught about Our Lady and her “apostles of the latter times” in his book, *True Devotion to Mary*:

•“It was only through Mary that God the Father gave His only-begotten Son to the world...The world was unworthy, says St. Augustine, to receive the Son of God directly from the Father’s hands. He gave Him to Mary in order that the world might receive Him through her.” [\[550\]](#)

Explaining the action and conduct of each Divine Person of the Holy

Trinity toward Mary in regard to the Incarnation and the first coming of Jesus Christ, the saint wrote, “They still pursue [it] daily, in an invisible manner, throughout the whole Church, and They will pursue it even to the consummation of ages in the last coming of Christ.” [551]

- **“Mary has produced, together with the Holy Ghost, the greatest thing which has been or ever will be—a God-Man; and she will consequently produce the greatest saints that there will be in time. The formation and the education of the great saints who shall come at the end of the world are reserved for her.”** [552]

- “It is Mary alone who has found grace before God (Lk. 1:3) without the aid of any other mere creature; it is only through her that all those who have since found grace before God have found it at all, and it is only through her that all those who shall come afterward shall find it.” [553] (Here we might observe that St. Bernard said something similar, explaining that when the angel greeted Mary at the Incarnation, he said “thou hast found grace with God,” meaning she who was previously addressed as “full of grace” had also *found* grace for the conversion of sinners.) [554]

- “It was through Mary that the salvation of the world was begun, and it is through Mary that it must be consummated. Mary hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ, in order that men, as yet but little instructed and enlightened on the Person of her Son, should not remove themselves from Him in attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her...But in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Ghost in order that, through her, Jesus Christ may be known, loved and served. The reasons which moved the Holy Ghost to hide His spouse during her life, and to reveal her but very little since the preaching of the *Gospel*, exist no longer.” [555]

- “Being the way by which Jesus came to us the first time, she will also be the way by which He will come the second time, though not in the same manner.” (This anticipated era before Our Lord’s Second Coming is one which many call **“The Age of Mary.”**) [556]

- “Mary must shine forth more than ever in *mercy*, in *might* and in *grace*, in these latter times: **in mercy**, to bring back and lovingly receive the poor strayed sinners who shall be converted and shall return to the Catholic Church; **in might**, against the enemies of God, idolaters, schismatics, Mahometans, Jews and souls hardened in impiety, who shall rise in terrible revolt against God to seduce all those who shall oppose them and to make

them fall by promises and threats; and finally, she must shine forth **in grace**, in order to animate and sustain the valiant soldiers and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, who shall battle for His interests.” [557]

- “And lastly, Mary must be terrible to the devil and his crew, as an army arranged in battle, principally in these latter times, because the devil, knowing that he has but little time, and now less than ever, to destroy souls, will every day redouble his efforts and his combats. He will presently raise up cruel persecutions and will put terrible snares before the faithful servants and true children of Mary, whom it gives him more trouble to conquer than it does to conquer others.” [558]

- **“But the power of Mary over all the devils will especially shine forth in the latter times, when Satan will lay his snares against her heel;** that is to say, her humble slaves and her poor children, whom she will raise up to make war against him. They shall be little and poor in the world’s esteem, and abased before all like the heel, trodden underfoot and persecuted as the heel is by the other members of the body. But in return for this, they shall be rich in the grace of God, which Mary shall distribute to them abundantly. They shall be great and exalted before God in sanctity, superior to all other creatures by their lively zeal, and so well sustained with God’s assistance that, with the humility of their heel, in union with Mary, they shall crush the head of the devil and cause Jesus Christ to triumph.” [559]

- “In a word, God wishes that His holy Mother should be at present more known, more loved, more honored than she has ever been. This, no doubt, will take place if the predestinate enter, with the grace and light of the Holy Ghost, into the interior and perfect practice which I will disclose to them shortly. Then they will see clearly, as far as faith allows, that beautiful Star of the Sea. They will arrive happily in harbor, following its guidance, in spite of the tempests and the pirates....they will have recourse to her in all things, as to their dear advocate and Mediatrix with Jesus Christ. They will know what is the surest, the easiest, the shortest and the most perfect means of going to Jesus Christ; and they will give themselves to Mary, body and soul, without reserve, that they may thus belong entirely to Jesus Christ.”

- **“But who shall those servants, slaves, and children of Mary be?**

They shall be the ministers of the Lord who, like a burning fire, shall kindle the fire of divine love everywhere. They shall be ‘like sharp arrows in the hand of the powerful’ Mary to pierce her enemies. (Ps. 126:4)”

“They shall be sons of Levi, well-purified by the fire of great tribulation,

and closely adhering to God (1 Cor. 6:17), who shall carry the gold of love in their heart, the incense of prayer in their spirit, and the myrrh of mortification in their body. They shall be everywhere the good odor of Jesus Christ to the poor and to the little, while at the same time, they shall be an odor of death to the great, to the rich and to the proud worldlings.”

“They shall be clouds thundering and flying through the air at the least breath of the Holy Ghost; who, detaching themselves from everything and troubling themselves about nothing, shall shower forth the rain of the Word of God and of life eternal. They shall thunder against sin; they shall storm against the world; they shall strike the devil and his crew; and they shall pierce through and through, for life or for death, with their two-edged sword of the Word of God (Eph. 6:17), all those to whom they shall be sent on the part of the most High.”

• **“They shall be the true apostles of the latter times**, to whom the Lord of Hosts shall give the word and the might to work marvels and to carry off with glory the spoils of His enemies. They shall sleep without gold or silver and, what is more, without care, in the midst of the other priests, ecclesiastics, and clerics (Ps. 67:14); and yet they shall have the silvered wings of the dove to go, with the pure intention of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, wheresoever the Holy Ghost shall call them. Nor shall they leave behind them, in the places where they have preached, anything but the gold of charity, which is the fulfillment of the whole law. (Rom. 13:10)”

“In a word, we know that they shall be true disciples of Jesus Christ, walking in the footsteps of His poverty, humility, contempt of the world, charity; teaching the narrow way of God in pure truth according to the *Holy Gospel*, and not according to the maxims of the world; troubling themselves about nothing; not accepting persons; sparing, fearing and listening to no mortal, however influential he may be...”

“These are the great men who are to come; but **Mary is the one who, by order of the Most High, shall fashion them** for the purpose of extending His empire over that of the impious, the idolaters and the Mahometans. **But when and how shall this be?** God alone knows.”

And so we pray and sacrifice for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart via the obedience of the Pope, the bishops, and the laity to the Virgin’s requests at Fatima. With St. Louis Marie de Montfort, we too can say, “As for us, we have but to hold our tongues, to pray, to sigh, and to wait: *‘With expectation I have waited.’* (Ps. 39:2)” [\[560\]](#)

PART 15

Fatima's Foremost Request

“Make it known to the Holy Father that I am always awaiting the Consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart. *Without the Consecration, Russia will not be able to convert, nor will the world have peace.*”

–*Our Lady of Fatima to Sr. Lucia, May, 1952*

October 13, 2017 will mark the 100th anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima, the most-well known of all true Marian apparitions of the Modern Age. In August, 2013, most Catholics heard that on October 13, 2013, the 96th anniversary of the Miracle, Pope Francis would repeat the consecration of the world (but not Russia, specifically) to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. That news brought forth a world-wide flurry of wasted commentary because, ultimately, Pope Francis neither *consecrated* the world nor Russia. Rather, his words of “entrustment” indicated that he (and perhaps those present who wished to unite themselves with him) offered a prayer of appeal to the “Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima,” which, while laudatory, is not the required response to the Holy Mother’s consistent request for a **collegial** act of solemn **consecration** of **Russia** to her under the **specific** title, **“Immaculate Heart of Mary.”**

As mentioned above, it began on August 13, 2013 when the Fatima Sanctuary’s official website published the following announcement, which again was erroneously translated because the word “consecration” did not appear in the original Portuguese: “In response to the desire of Holy Father Francis, the Statue of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, venerated in the Little Chapel of Apparitions, will be brought to Rome on October 12/13 to be present at the Marian Day promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. On October 13, next to the Statue of Our Lady, Pope Francis will make the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

“[The] Marian Day is one of the great pontifical events marked down on the calendar of celebrations of the Year of Faith which will bring to Rome hundreds of movements and institutions connoted with Marian devotion.”

“In a letter addressed to Bishop Antonio Marto, of Leiria-Fatima, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, [Archbishop] Rino Fisichella, informs that ‘all ecclesial

entities of Marian spirituality' are invited to take part in this Marian day, a gathering which includes, on the 12th, a pilgrimage to the tomb of Apostle St. Peter and other moments of prayer and meditation and, on the 13th, a Mass presided over by Pope Francis, in St. Peter's Square."

"In that letter, [Archbishop] Fisichella wrote: 'The Holy Father strongly desires that the Marian Day may have present, as a special sign, one of the most significant Marian icons for Christians throughout the world and, for that reason, we thought of the beloved original Statue of Our Lady of Fatima.'"

"Therefore, the Statue of Our Lady will depart from the Shrine of Fatima on the morning of October 12 and return on the afternoon of October 13. Scheduled to take its place in the Little Chapel of Apparitions is the first Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which is enthroned in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary since December 8, 2003." [\[561\]](#)

On the internet, online news sources repeated the report above, and the inquiries and comments immediately began. One question that consistently arose was similar to the following: "But what about *Russia*? The world has already been consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but Our Lady specifically said *Russia*." The second was: "What about the bishops? Are they going to join in the consecration? Will any of them tell the Pope that it is *Russia* they together must solemnly consecrate?"

For example, one comment to a news article stated: "Pope Francis' consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in October, is another repetition of the consecrations of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, made by John Paul II in 1982, 1984 and again in 2000. If these previous acts of consecration of the WORLD met the requirements of heaven to consecrate RUSSIA, where is the promised Triumph of Mary and WORLD PEACE? It is outrageous to suggest that heaven accepted the acts of consecration by John Paul II as valid, but God then failed to fulfill the promises attached to a valid act of consecration. If Our Lady desired the CONSECRATION OF THE WORLD, WHY DID SHE ASK FOR THE CONSECRATION OF RUSSIA? Surely, the Mother of God knows the difference between the two? Why the disconnect between heaven's request and the response of the Popes? And, since the previous consecrations of the world didn't produce the promises attached to a valid consecration of Russia, why is this one going to be any different?" [\[562\]](#)

These questions are just and reasonable. Both Pope Pius XI (in 1930 and

again in 1937) and Pius XII (in April 1940) learned through Sr. Lucia of the Virgin's specific requests. In those ten years, she was met with silence, so that her superior, Bishop de Silva, suggested that she change the conditions to consecrating the world, with a special mention of Russia. Although she resisted the concept, she eventually mentioned it but made it clear that it was the bishop's idea and not Our Lady's request.

On October 31, 1942, "*the Church and the peoples of the world*" were consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in a "Radio Address" by Pope Pius XII. A decade later, in his *Apostolic Letter to the Peoples of Russia* (July 7, 1952), he wrote that "just as a few years ago, We consecrated the entire human race to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, so today We consecrate and in a most special manner We entrust all the peoples of Russia to this Immaculate Heart," etc. It's clearly evident that neither a radio address nor an apostolic letter is a solemn and public act of consecration, much less a collegial one.

Pope Pius XII's 1942 consecration of the Church and the peoples of the world (which occurred near the height of World War II) shortened what Our Lord called "the current distress" (the war), but it did not bring about the promised conversion of Russia, which is exactly what Christ had forewarned Lucia would occur since the Pope did not do exactly as he was asked. WWII ended three years later—which makes one wonder how much longer it would have lasted without the benefit of the uncalled-for consecration of the *world*, or how much faster the war would have ended, not to mention how quickly Russia's conversion and the world-wide era of peace would have commenced – if only the Pope and bishops followed Our Lady's very simple "request" to consecrate *Russia* to her Immaculate Heart. Instead, three more years passed before WWII's terrible conclusion, during which time millions had died in service, in battles on ground, ship, or plane, and in blitzes on civilian cities, and by atrocities in concentration camps. Finally—lest we forget—WWII only came to an end with not one but *two* atomic bombs on civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

As would be later reported by *Il Pellegrinaggio Della Meravigle* in Rome, 1960, published under the auspices of the Italian episcopate, two months before Pius XII made the July 1952 "consecration," Our Lady appeared to Sr. Lucia, saying, "Make it known to the Holy Father that I am always awaiting the Consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart. *Without the Consecration, Russia will not be able to convert, nor will the*

world have peace.” The report also affirms that this message was communicated to Pope Pius XII in June but, for reasons never understood, he chose not to heed it. Seven years after this report became public, in 1967, Canon Barthas mentioned the May, 1952 apparition in his communication (*De Primoridiis cultus mariana, Acta congressus mariologici-mariana in Lusitania anno 1967 celebrati*, p. 517) to the Mariological Congress of Lisbon-Fatima.

The sufferings of the 1930’s, World War II and all following wars, the contagion of the modernist heresy, the spread of false religious sects, the persecution of Christians, the immoral culture in which we are now forced to live and from which we all suffer, the increasing family dissensions and the sorrows that come with them, and so much more, could have been avoided if only Pope Pius XI or Pope Pius XII had done exactly what the Virgin asked in 1929.

Those Popes are not alone. Other Popes followed suit, making solitary acts of consecration (or entrustment) of the *world* (but never Russia) to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and without the participation of the world’s bishops. None of those deeds were what the Virgin asked of a Pope, and so the ultimate grace of Russia’s conversion and a world-wide era of peace have not yet been granted.

Tragically, the October 13, 2013 papal act did not even consecrate the world, as news sources around the globe had earlier announced. That which was done by Pope Francis was again not the fulfillment of Our Lady’s repeated requests that the Pope and the bishops *solemnly consecrate Russia* to her Immaculate Heart. In fact, it was even less. It was a kind of “entrustment,” but it was not a **consecration, which is an act of blessing a person** (as when a priest is consecrated as a bishop), **place** (like a church), **or thing** (like an altar and its vessels) **because it will be set aside for a sacred purpose in the service and worship of God**. That said, Vatican Radio posted the text of Pope Francis’ 2013 entrustment, which is translated as follows:

“Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima, with renewed gratitude for Your maternal presence we unite our voice with that of all the generations who call You blessed.”

“We celebrate in You the great works of God, Who never tires to incline with mercy on humanity, afflicted by evil and wounded by sin, to heal it and save it.”

“Accept with the compassion of a Mother the act of entrustment which today we make with confidence, before this Your image to us so dear.”

“We are certain that each one of us is precious to Your eyes and that nothing which dwells in our hearts is unknown to You.”

“Let us reach Your sweet gaze and receive the consoling caress of Your smile. Guard our life in Your arms: bless and strengthen every good desire; revive and foster faith; sustain and illumine hope; create and enliven charity; guide all of us in the path of holiness.”

“Teach us Your same preferential love for the small and the poor, for the excluded and the suffering, for sinners and the lost: gather all under Your protection and give all of us to Your beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus. Amen.”

[\[563\]](#)

As one can see by the words above, not once was the title “Immaculate Heart” or the word for *world* (“mundo”) expressed by the Pope. The “act of entrustment” was a personal one and had nothing to do with the Virgin’s requests at Fatima, other than the selected date of October 13 and the transportation of the Pilgrim Virgin statue. Thousands had flocked to Fatima on that day, happy and ecstatic in expecting, at the least, a renewal of previous world consecrations made by previous popes. Even that did not happen. Simply stated, Our Lady of Fatima has waited almost 100 years for the Vicar of Christ to heed her requests for the following:

- **Worldwide devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**
- **Papal promulgation of the Five First Saturdays of Reparation for the five major blasphemies committed against the Virgin’s Immaculate Heart.**
- **The public dissemination of the Third Secret Text.**
- **The solemn and public collegial consecration of Russia (and Russia alone) to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**

Individual Catholics can and do respond to the other requests made by the Blessed Mother at Fatima (daily Rosary, daily duty offered in penance, making sacrifices for the conversion of sinners, the wearing of the Brown Scapular, conscientiously striving not to offend the Lord our God any longer, and taking part in First Saturday devotions where they might be offered, or otherwise privately making the intention of reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at a Saturday Mass when the intention is not publicly stated by the priest; the requirements include Confession, Holy Mass, Rosary, and 15 additional minutes on the 15 Rosary Mysteries of the Redemption).

However, *only a Pope* can take action to fulfill the other requests of the Virgin. *Only a Pope* can command and lead the bishops to join him in a solemn, public act of consecration of Russia to Our Lady's most pure Heart. *Only a Pope* can universally promote the Five First Saturday devotions, and now (at this point in history, since in 1957 the Vatican ordered Lucia's bishop, who was entrusted to release the Third Secret in 1960, to send it and all other Fatima documents to Rome) *only a Pope* can ensure that the Third Secret Text is fully released to the entire world.

**Red Herrings:
Flotsam and Jetsam
in the Mainstream**

In response to inquiries about the collegial consecration of Russia, the usual red herring remarks arose like flotsam and jetsam swirling through the Catholic mainstream's news, blog articles, and commentary. What is most curious is the amount of time devoted and the consistent hardline resistance made by those who, in one way or the other, employ the most unreasonable pretexts to summarily reject the Virgin's specific requests.

Despite the facts of history and the mounds of documentation (spanning from 1917 to the present), critics who are provided with all the proofs which objectively counter their erroneous claims decide to ignore them, instead choosing to refute the facts with *ad hominem* attacks. Those who are familiar with and keep abreast of the ongoing debate over the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart can easily anticipate the usual red herrings:

- "The Pope [meaning John Paul II] said he did it." (Actually, Pope John Paul II never made such a statement. Others tried to imply it, but he himself never said it. Furthermore, this same claim that only John Paul II's actions matter implicitly deems as irrelevant the world consecrations to the Immaculate Heart made by Pope Pius XII and Paul VI.)

- "You're disobedient to the Pope!" (That is a judgmental conclusion concerning the state of another's soul, which Christ Himself forbade. One usually finds that this accusation is an *ad hominem* tactic used by those who do not know the entire history regarding the Fatima apparitions and aren't interested in learning it, but still wish to debate its most important points. Too, such critics are otherwise quick to claim "thou shalt not judge" when discussing Catholic moral issues with which they disagree. Their stance also shows a tragic ignorance of the Church's defined dogma on papal infallibility. And again, no pope ever stated that he fulfilled the Virgin's

requests.)

- “This is the stuff of conspiracy theorists (or malcontents).” (This is a negative emotional response. The consecration discussion is usually divided between those who can objectively—that is, impartially, fairly, neutrally—examine facts and those who allow their emotions to rule over their reason. Furthermore, faithful Catholics will never disregard the words of the Mother of God uttered in apparitions which the Church approved as worthy of belief, or the accolades of many Popes for Our Lady of Fatima, or the words of Lucia who, both as a child and as a cloistered nun, proved herself a faithful witness.)

- “Lucia said it was done.” (Also not true; the claim contradicts decades of her testimony, including her remarks made before and after the consecrations of the 1980’s. Furthermore, Lucia was commanded to absolute silence from 1958 (after her revealing interview with Fr. Fuentes) until her death on February 13, 2005. She was not allowed to have visitors without the Pope’s explicit permission. Even her confessor was halted from seeing her. If all was done as Our Lady of Fatima requested, there was no need to keep Sr. Lucia smothered by such an extreme command of silence or required permission for visitors, anymore than that which was included in the Rule of the Carmelites. Like those who dared to put words in Pope John Paul II’s mouth, others have made false claims on Lucia’s behalf.

“I’m convinced that Sister Lucia continued to have conversations, or whatever you want to call them: apparitions, visions, inner locutions, with Our Lady. She had them for decades, ***all through the eighties and beyond***,” states Cardinal Bertone in his book, *Last Secret of Fatima*, published in 2008. One can reasonably ask: If everything was done with Pope John Paul II’s consecrations and entrustments, then why did Heaven continue to communicate with Lucia all through the 1980’s and *beyond*? Furthermore, Cardinal Bertone said, “During our meetings, she referred to a ***whole sequence*** of dates between 1985 and 1989.”[\[564\]](#)

A whole ***sequence*** is a chain or succession of events, which apparently for Sr. Lucia began anew in 1985, the year *following* the March 1984 consecration of the world but a year *before* the 1986 pan-religious Assisi, Italy event. This particular sequence continued for at least four years, but it should be kept in mind that the Cardinal also said Lucia had messages “beyond” this time. First consider that it was immediately after publicly reciting the text prepared for the 1984 consecration that Pope John Paul II

spontaneously added a revealing sentence, saying, “Enlighten especially the peoples whose consecration and entrustment by us you are still awaiting.” Within the following year, John Paul II, waiting for the era of peace to arrive due to his previous acts, decided he needed to do something more. That conclusion resulted in his arrangement and participation of the 1986 Assisi pan-religious, “ecumenical” prayer meetings with world leaders of false religions, which scandalized many in Rome and elsewhere in the Church. Although Bertone claimed that Lucia revealed she had a “whole sequence” of heavenly apparitions and/or locutions between 1985 and 1989, he soon followed it with a curious remark that Lucia was “evasive about her continuing conversations with Mary, and she would change the subject whenever it was brought up.” This, of course, makes little sense, but Cardinal Bertone has previously shown himself confused about many things regarding the Third Secret and the need for the collegial consecration of **Russia** to the Virgin’s Immaculate Heart.)

- “Russia is included in the world, so to insist that Russia must be specifically mentioned is hair-splitting.” (Russia is part of the world, but the world is not a part of Russia, and Russia alone is the nation to be consecrated.)

- “The era of peace is on its way because John Paul II did what he could; we just have to do our part” or “Russia is converting; see how it is trying to instill Christian values?” (Sadly, perhaps even blasphemously, this view makes a liar of the Virgin, the Queen of Prophets. She was quite clear about the specific conditions that would fulfill her promise of Russia’s conversion to the Roman Catholic Faith, ushering in the era of peace and the triumph of her Immaculate Heart.)

- “Fatima is a private revelation so we aren’t obligated to believe in it or act on the requests.” (Incorrect, on many counts, and which this book covers elsewhere. However, a few points shall here be mentioned: First, we have to consider the comments of popes about Fatima, from Pius XII, “The time for doubting Fatima is past; it is time to take action” to John Paul II’s “Fatima places an obligation on the Church” to Benedict XVI’s stunning 2010 remark that Fatima’s prophetic mission is not complete. Second, six popes have publicly recognized Fatima, with two of them, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, traveling there in public homage to the Mother of God. Furthermore, Fatima’s “prophetic mission,” as Benedict XVI called it, warns of the commencement of certain apocalyptic chapters, but it also offers a

specific remedy with particular directions to the Church hierarchy to save the *visible* Church and therefore save even more souls in the world.)

The two most recent “short baits” added to the bucket of red herrings are rather incorrigible assertions against the Virgin’s words that the collegial consecration of Russia will bring about that nation’s conversion and an era of peace for the world. The first absurdity claims that to believe a collegial consecration of *Russia* can do “all that” is akin to believing in magic (“*Abracadabra and Hocus Pocus! Whoosh, now Russia is converted!*” as one commentator phrased it) and second, Russia never asked any pope for any such consecration, which invalidates the Virgin’s request.

Conspicuously missing are similar remarks about “magic” or “invalidity” when a Pope decides to consecrate the *world* to Mary’s Immaculate Heart. Why, then, are they made when given the reminder of Our Lady’s request that *Russia* is to be consecrated by the Pope and the bishops?

For example, what is conveniently (and consistently) overlooked (even when reminded) are decades of evidence proving Our Lady’s insistence that her requests are heeded. In fact, one notes a “heavenly determination” from both Christ and the Virgin regarding the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart. Of all the requests, the collegial consecration of Russia is one which Heaven kept repeating.

What is also ignored is that which was mentioned above—the late Pope John Paul II’s remark that “Fatima places an obligation on the Church” and the revelation made in May 2010 by Benedict XVI, now Bishop Emeritus of Rome: “We would be mistaken to think that Fatima’s prophetic mission is complete.” [\[565\]](#) And while there are superfluous claims that Sr. Lucia said the world consecrations fulfill Our Lady’s request (another untruth), what is never acknowledged are Sr. Lucia’s frequent remarks about the “diabolical disorientation” afflicting the world, including those within the Church. In a word, presented facts are ignored because, as St. Thomas Aquinas said, “Against a fact, there is no argument.”

The Meaning of Consecration

For the purposes of this section, I will not set out to prove that Fatima does not fall into the realm of private revelation but is a fulfillment of Divine Revelation and so it is what some describe as a prophetic and public revelation. Again, that topic was previously covered in this book. Nor shall I here respond *in-depth* to any of previous red herrings since many other objective authors have previously done so. Instead, let’s briefly look at the

last two counter-claims that insist that any belief in swift and positive results from the requested consecration is akin to believing in magic, and that Our Lady's request regarding Russia cannot be valid because Russia has not asked for that honor.

Unfortunately, those who contribute such bizarre commentary against the facts that the Virgin's insistence on the collegial consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart remain unfulfilled clearly do not understand that Christ is King and Mary is Queen and that both have dominion over the Church and the world. They do not grasp that a reigning Pope is the Vicar of Christ, the Steward of the Church, which is God's kingdom on earth, and that the Catholic bishops are princes of the same Church. Since Mary is Queen, and not only a Queen Mother (which would mean, at least in the earthly sense, that hers is only an honorary title with no real authority), she has the right to make requests of her Son's Steward and princes, and she has the right to expect their obedience.

It therefore follows that objectors to the collegial consecration of Russia cannot grasp the four following issues regarding the Virgin's requests: **1)** The Virgin's office in salvation and her right to ask for devotion to her Immaculate Heart (which includes understanding the depths of that title and all else that such devotion implies), **2)** the nature, duty, authority, jurisdiction, and scope of the Pope's leadership as Christ's Steward on earth; and **3)** the duty and authority of the bishops who are joined in union with the Pope and subject to him, and **4)** the Catholic definition of the word "consecration." In a brief response to these four points:

1) "Jesus is King of the Eternal Ages by nature and by right of conquest; *through* Him, *with* Him, and *subordinate* to Him, Mary is Queen by grace, by divine relationship, by right of conquest and by singular election. And her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God, since *nothing is excluded from her dominion.*" [566] (These two topics—Jesus as King, Mary as Queen—are included later in this book.)

2) A reigning Pope possesses supreme authority (because only God possesses *absolute* authority). "Not only did Christ constitute St. Peter head of the Church but in the words 'Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven,' He indicated the scope of this leadership." [567] Furthermore, "The Church is a perfect society. She is not dependent on the permission of the State for her existence, but holds her charter from God. As

a perfect society, she has a right to *all those means which are necessary for the attaining of her end.*" [568]

The Church has the right to exist because Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, founded her. What is the purpose of the Church? To save souls. Therefore to protect herself, her children, and those in the world who may yet be spiritually saved, the Church has the duty and the corresponding *right* to obey the Virgin of Fatima and consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, without asking anyone's permission. This, of course, always applies to the reigning Pope, who has the duty and its corresponding right to order the world's bishops to join him in the necessary act of consecration without asking for either their consent or Russia's. After all, the few previous popes who made solitary attempts to consecrate the world did not ask for the approval of every nation in the world.

3) "Bishop is the title of an ecclesiastical dignitary who possesses the fullness of the priesthood to rule a diocese as its chief pastor, *in due submission to the primacy of the pope.*" [569] The Pope, as Bishop of Rome, is not only "first among the bishops" in the sense of being the eldest brother, but he is the supreme head of the Church; the Supreme Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ, the monarch of Our Lord's kingdom on earth. Heaven wants every bishop, from the Pope in Rome to the bishop of the most humble diocese, to participate in a literally universal (which in Greek means Catholic) act so that the entire world will know of it. When a Pope finally commands the world's Catholic bishops to join him in the "collegial" consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, the bishops must obey him, just as he, as Steward, will be obeying the command of God, given through the Queen through her chosen messenger, Sr. Lucia. Should some bishops choose not to obey the Holy Father, the fault will be theirs, but not the Pope's. Despite the chance of such disobedience, the Supreme Pontiff still must carry through with the bishops who yet submit to him and, together with them, undertake the solemn and public consecration of Russia to the Virgin's Immaculate Heart.

4) The word "**consecration**" literally means "to associate with the sacred." The *Catholic Encyclopedia* explains: "Consecration, in general, is an act by which a thing is separated from a common and profane to a sacred use, **or by which a person or thing is dedicated to the service and worship of God** by prayers, rites, and ceremonies." [570] Any nation that is thus consecrated by the Pope and the world's bishops to the Virgin's Immaculate Heart should humbly consider itself as highly favored to be placed under the

Mother of God's protection and intercession before the Most Holy Trinity.

Finally and to repeat: Among all of Our Lady's requests, it is clear that a Pope who commands and leads the collegial consecration of Russia is the most imperative act. It cannot be foreseen which will come first—the collegial consecration, exactly as Our Lady requested it, or the fulfilment of her other requests (the public release of the entire Third Secret, meaning the words of Our Lady that accompanied it; worldwide devotion to her Immaculate Heart; the Five First Saturdays of Reparation, etc.). That said, it is reasonable to conclude that the consecration must come first for the rest to follow, including Russia's conversion to the Roman Catholic Faith and the promised era of universal peace.

What we do know with certainty is that both Christ and the Virgin many times repeated the necessity of the consecration of Russia by the Pope and the world's bishops. Such insistence on the part of God and His Holy Mother makes it clear that the consecration is Heaven's foremost request. As Our Lord said in 1931 to Sr. Lucia (and through her, to us), **“Pray much for the Holy Father.** He will do it, but it will be late. Nevertheless, the Immaculate Heart of Mary will save Russia. It has been entrusted to her.”

THE WOMAN AND THE BATTLE OF THE LATTER DAYS

“For those who believe in God,
no explanation is necessary.
For those who do not believe in
God,
no explanation will suffice.”

Now and in the days ahead, the Church Militant must not place its faith in mere human means to restore the Church. “Modern times are dominated by Satan and will be more so in the future,” said St. Maximilian Kolbe. “The conflict with hell cannot be engaged by men, even the most clever. The Immaculate alone has from God the promise of victory over Satan.” [\[571\]](#)

Those words echo the revelations of the Queen of Heaven, who came to Fatima, revealing in essence that Christ reserves to her the final triumph in the battle of the latter days. In that combat, all that the children of Mary need do is heed the requests of Our Lady—it is as simple as that.

To quote the character of Lord Elrond in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, “This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world; small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.” [\[572\]](#)

Two Handmaidens to Sanctity

When events and circumstances leave us feeling helpless, we may find ourselves saying, “There is nothing I can do but pray,” momentarily forgetting that **prayer and sacrifice** are the lot of the elect. Prayer and sacrifice are the two spiritual handmaidens to sanctity; they are always the conditions required by God Himself to obtain favors.

Our Lord foresaw that, for the faithful of the Modern Age, daily life would become burdensome. Throughout our sacred history, it is always the

same story—an age of increased sin, affecting not only the sinner but everyone. The difference between our age and former times is that mortal sin is prevalent, officially endorsed by almost all governments and, tragically, encouraged and committed even by those within the Church.

Our Blessed Mother’s constant intercession for this sinful age is the reason **Heaven made clear that the prayer of our times must be the Rosary.** It seems nothing can stop the madness, for the Church’s human element is infiltrated with the sins of modernism—and that reality explains why Our Lord said that life as a faithful Catholic would be our *true* penance.

When on a great scale mankind abandons God and tempts Him to turn His face from us, Our Lady’s continual intercession is the last means to save souls; that is the reason why God wishes to establish devotion to the Immaculate Heart. When we are tempted to think we have nowhere to go for help, we cannot forget Our Lady of Fatima’s consoling words, “My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge, and the path that leads you to God.”

Our Mother, Mediatrix, and Queen

Numerous are the battlefronts in the great spiritual war of the latter days. The world news worsens with tragic reports—martyrdoms of the faithful, scandals, murders, terrible accidents, thefts, and increasing revolts against the Church and the Holy Father. Too, the number of “natural” cataclysms like earthquakes, floods, and volcanic eruptions seem to be rising.

The faithful may continue to fight the good fight, declaring their outrage against the persecutions of their fellows, signing petitions, writing letters of protest against all kinds of scandals, joining marches in defense of morality, and engaging those who ardently resist the Tridentine Rite’s restoration in every parish and diocese. Still, despite our best efforts, we must admit that, as Pope Pius IX once declared, **“up till now reasonable demands and repeated protests have availed nothing to remove these evils.”** [\[573\]](#)

Our Lady also wants *conversions*, which includes advancement in the interior life of the soul. The Rosary prayers and the sacrifices of the faithful have not yet been enough to bring worldwide devotion to the Immaculate Heart. Only that devotion, with the collegial consecration of Russia to the same Pure Heart, will bring the era of peace to all mankind and the conversion of Russia, who has spread her errors throughout the world.

Our own efforts are not enough, perhaps due not only to our lack in numbers but also to our lack of confidence. As Our Lady said at Akita, “Those who place their confidence in me will be saved.” [\[574\]](#) Why?

She is Our Mother and Mediatrix: “With a heart that is truly a mother's does she approach the problem of our salvation,” wrote Blessed Pope Pius IX, “and is solicitous for the whole human race; made Queen of heaven and earth by the Lord...standing at the right hand of her only Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord, she intercedes powerfully for us with a mother's prayers, obtains what she seeks, and cannot be refused.” [\[575\]](#)

She loves us and desires our salvation: As Pope St. Leo declared, “It has been her unremitting concern to see to it that the Catholic Faith stands firmly lodged in the midst of the people, there to thrive in its fertile and undivided unity.” [\[576\]](#)

She is the cause of salvation: Pope Pius XII quoted St. Irenaeus in saying, “she has been constituted the cause of salvation for the whole human race.” [\[577\]](#)

She is the Virgin Queen and Mother of the King: “Because the Virgin Mary was raised to such a lofty dignity as to be the mother of the King of kings,” held St. Alphonsus Liguori, “it is deservedly and by every right that the Church has honored her with the title of ‘Queen.’” [\[578\]](#)

She is the Queen of Peace: As Blessed Pius IX urged, “Whoever, therefore, reverences the Queen of heaven and earth—and let no one consider himself exempt from this tribute of a grateful and loving soul—let him invoke the most effective of Queens, the Mediatrix of peace; let him respect and preserve peace...**to its safeguarding and growth the gentle urgings and commands of the Virgin Mary impel us.**” [\[579\]](#)

Our Lady came to Fatima as Mother, Mediatrix and Queen, there to affirm the Church’s central doctrines. With a supreme and royal dignity, she also gave commands in the gentle way befitting our true Lady and Queen.

The Virgin’s specific requests, while simple, give us frequent opportunities to practice the virtues we need most: **1)** The daily Rosary, **2)** daily duty as true penance, **3)** sacrifice for the conversion of sinners, **4)** the Five First Saturdays devotion, and **5)** the necessity of wearing the Brown Scapular (the Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel), since Our Lady held it out during the Miracle of the Sun.

Incidentally: The Scapular should be blessed (or the recipient enrolled in the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel by a Catholic priest; when enrolled, this means that each new Scapular need not be blessed since the blessing is carried by the person, who still must wear the Scapular). To obtain the Sabbatine Privilege associated with the Brown Scapular (wherein Our

Lady promised centuries ago, “I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death and whomsoever I shall find in Purgatory, I shall free, so that I may lead them to the holy mountain of life everlasting”), there are three conditions: **1)** it must be worn (within reason; one can remove it when taking a bath or shower, for example), **2)** live chastely according to one’s state in life, and **3)** Pray *the Little Office of Our Blessed Mother*, which can be substituted by the Rosary with a Catholic priest’s permission.

There is also the sixth request, comprised of two parts. For the Holy Father and the bishops of the world, God Himself commands the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The request’s second part is the universal establishment of the Communion of Reparation (the Five First Saturdays Devotion), which is founded on Confession, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Rosary and meditation on the Psalter’s 15 mysteries in reparation for blasphemies against Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart.

The solemn act of consecration will bring the era of peace and world-wide conversion, because it will firmly establish true devotion to Our Lady’s Pure Heart, that path that will lead us to God. No one but the Holy Father can order the bishops to join him in that solemn act, so we must always pray and sacrifice for that intention. As for the Five First Saturdays of Reparation, we ourselves can make this devotion every month of the year for those who do not, as Sr. Lucia did all of her life.

The Virgin said, “If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated... In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and an era of peace will be granted to the world.” [\[580\]](#)

To save souls from hell in this age of spiritual chaos, the Lady revealed that God “wills to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart... To whoever embraces this devotion, I promise salvation; those souls will be cherished by God, as flowers placed by Me to adorn His throne...If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace.” [\[581\]](#)

The Sacred and Immaculate Hearts

The Immaculate Heart devotion has long been willed by Christ. Almost seven centuries ago, the Sacred Heart made clear to St. Mechtilde (Matilda)

that He Himself is “the herald of this devotion [to His Mother’s Heart], which He teaches to us both by word and example.” [582] In modern times, Our Lord told Sr. Lucia the reason why the solemn, public collegial consecration of Russia to the Virgin’s Heart is His Will: “Because I want My whole Church to acknowledge that Consecration as a triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary so that it may extend its cult later on and put the devotion to this Immaculate Heart beside the devotion to My Sacred Heart...” [583]

Many saints have insisted that devotion to the Sacred Heart is itself a sign of the last days. As St. Gertrude once said, “The love of the Incarnate Word as exemplified by His Divine Heart is reserved for the last ages to be made known, so that the world, carried away by follies, may regain a little of the warmth of early Christian charity by learning of the love of the Sacred Heart.” [584]

The Fatima revelations are also a sign of what Sr. Lucia, Servant of God, called “the last times of the world.” It is not hard to see with eyes of Faith that Scriptural prophecy came to pass at Fatima when “*a great sign appeared in Heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.*” [585]

We have seen that, in the *Apocalypse*, “a woman” is a symbol of the Church while, in *Genesis 3:15*, “the woman” is the Virgin Mary, foretold by God Himself. It was *the Woman* who appeared at Fatima as the apocalyptic sign that the greatest battle of our own age, the one between “*a woman clothed with the sun*” (the Virgin Mary and the Church on earth) and the dragon (Satan), had begun. That spiritual battle is one we will never win by our own efforts or designs, but only when all we do is “*with Mary, in Mary, through Mary, and for Mary.*” [586]

The Woman of Genesis, who came to Fatima, was even brighter than the sun, clad in a white gown and veil, the veil’s light making it appear as if it was trimmed in gold. Here it must be noted that white is considered “the color of mourning” worn *only* by Catholic queens, while gold is everywhere recognized as the color of royalty.

As already examined, the Lady wore two ornaments, one a long yellow necklace from which dangled a bright orb or jewel, symbolizing her bridal attributes as reigning consort of the Divine Spouse. Her other ornament was the Star of Esther, symbol of the Old Testament’s virgin queen who saved the entire nation of the elect from annihilation.

St. John Eudes explained, “Mary’s peerless heart is a fountain of light,

that was foreshadowed in the person of Queen Esther, who is represented in Sacred Scripture as a small fountain that becomes a great light and is turned into the sun. *‘The little fountain which grew into a river and was turned into a light, and into the sun...’* It is the fountain of the sun, *fons solis*, mentioned in chapters fifteen and seventeen of the *Book of Josue*.” The saint continued, “Truly the heart of Mary is the foundation of the sun, because Mary is the Mother of the Sun of Justice, and this Divine Sun is the fruit of Mary’s heart.” [587] St. John Eudes’ words give us more to ponder about the Virgin and the Miracle of the Sun, the “Great Sign” that would convince many to believe and again turn to God, thus saving their souls while avoiding the greatest sin threatening mankind, final apostasy.

In his commentary on St. Luke’s eschatological discourse of the great apostasy, St. Ambrose interpreted the symbols of sun, moon and stars in this way: “Many apostatizing from Christianity, the brightness of the Faith will be dimmed by this cloud of apostasy: since **the heavenly Sun grows dim or shines in splendour according to my Faith**. And as in its monthly eclipse **the moon**, by reason of the earth coming between it and the sun, disappears from view, so likewise the holy Church, *when the vices of the flesh stand in the way of the celestial light*, can no longer borrow the splendour of His divine light from the Sun of Christ. And in the persecutions, it was invariably the love of this life that stood in the path of the Divine Sun. **Also the stars** –that is, men surrounded by the praise of their fellow Christians–**shall fall**, as the bitterness of persecution mounts up; which must however come to pass, until the number of the faithful be made up; **for so the good are proved and the weak made known.**” [588]

The Example of St. Joan of Arc

If we genuinely know the whole truth of Fatima, why is there any doubt that Fatima is truly the fulfillment of prophecy from Divine Revelation? Why is it that *all the faithful* are not following Our Lady’s counsels to restore the Church, but instead fight the battle in ways we prefer?

How much would God be pleased should we imitate St. Joan of Arc, the virgin of Orleans, who was another figure-type of Our Lady.

“**To St. Joan’s mind the coronation and anointing of the King of France were ever present, because that anointing did homage to the universal Kingship of Christ,**” said Pope St. Pius X. [589]

Like Our Lady who, by God’s will, leads the army of the Church Militant, St. Joan also led an army by God’s command. Like Our Lady, St.

Joan insisted that her soldiers stop offending God, avail themselves of the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Eucharist, pray often and do well their daily duty.

In our turn, we must be like St. Joan, our minds ever fixed on the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, because it will restore the Social Reign of Christ the King. **What each one of us need to do –every day–is heed and promote every request of Our Lady of Fatima.**

“Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Gal. 6:10)

PART 16

The Age of Mary and the Lost Meaning of Conversion

“One purpose for which the Blessed Mother was created Mother of God is that she may obtain the salvation of many who, on account of weakness and wickedness, could not be saved according to the rigor of divine justice, but might be so with the help of this merciful Mother’s powerful intercession.”

-St. John Chrysostom

In these latter days of the Modern Age, Our Lady has appeared on earth more than in any other time in history. [\[590\]](#) As the spiritual war between good and evil intensifies, the Mediatrix of All Graces pleads with us to pray and do penance, even as she continues to intercede for us before the throne of God. In the ongoing epic battle for souls, each true Marian apparition in the Modern Age is, in the chronicles of sacred history, another chapter intended to remind all peoples—from practicing Catholics to those separated from God in diverse ways—of **the lost meaning of conversion**.

Just over one hundred years ago, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* provided **four definitions to conversion**, as follows: “a moral change, a turning or returning to God and to the true religion, in which sense it has passed into our modern languages. (For example, the conversions of St. Paul, of Constantine the Great, and of St. Augustine.) In the Middle Ages, the word conversion was often used in the sense of forsaking the world to enter the religious state. Thus St. Bernard speaks of his conversion. The return of the sinner to a life of virtue is also called a conversion. More commonly do we speak of the conversion of an infidel to the true religion, and most commonly of the conversion of a schismatic or heretic to the Catholic Church.” [\[591\]](#)

Already lost was the fifth and most crucial definition of conversion: the three ages of the interior life. Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard, author of *The Soul of the Apostolate*, defined the interior life as “the state of activity of a soul who strives against its natural inclinations in order to regulate them and endeavors to acquire the habit of judging and directing its movements in all things according to the light of the *Gospel* and the example of Our Lord.”

[\[592\]](#)

As the Dominican theologian Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance emphatically taught, “The interior life is for all the one thing necessary. It ought to be constantly developing in our souls...The interior life is lived in the depths of the soul...it is important to us not only as individuals, but also in our social relations; for it is evident that we can exert no real or profound influence upon our fellow-men unless we live a truly interior life ourselves.”

[\[593\]](#)

True Conversion in Three Stages

“Scripture often recalls, even to those who are in the state of grace, the necessity of a more profound conversion toward God,” explained Fr. Garrigou-Lagrance. [\[594\]](#) Our Lord, Who desires not the death of the sinner, wills that every soul should travel the path of the **three conversions**. This is **the secret** to which the lives of the Apostles and all the saints attest: *In all the labors of life, that of the interior life is the most important.*

The three stages are transitions or conversions, known as the **Purgative Way** (beginners), the **Illuminative Way** (proficients), and the **Unitive Way** (the perfect). Very simply stated, the three interior conversions might be called an increase in the life of sanctifying grace, which is a gratuitous gift from God and which we will lose when we lack humility, a spirit of mortification, confuse our pride or cowardice with virtues, etc.

The life of grace, said Fr. Garrigou-Lagrance, “is there, hidden within you, like the grain of mustard seed, like the leaven which will cause the whole of the meal to rise, like the treasure hidden in a field, like the source from which gushes a river of water that will never fail.” [\[595\]](#)

He also taught, “We are thus able to appreciate something of the importance of true conversion, by which a man passes from the state of mortal sin to the state of grace.” [\[596\]](#) This is the important first step of conversion, “the entrance into the kingdom of God, where the docile soul begins to reign with God over its own passions, over the spirit of the world and the spirit of evil.” [\[597\]](#)

A great crisis in the soul—which may or may not issue from a crisis in practical life—is the defining mark of transition from one stage to another. St. John of the Cross speaks of the imperfections being winnowed out, especially in the first two stages. Yet not all souls progress when the crisis comes. Many fall back, either by giving up the struggle or in becoming complacent and quite satisfied with Self.

Conversion is neither a one-time matter, nor is it enough to live the exterior life of a practicing Catholic nor even, perhaps, to be involved, even in small ways, in any apostolate. The signs of an advancing interior life have nothing to do with zealous activity, even for a good cause.

Necessary for any Catholic, including those leading or participating in an apostolate, is “to fight against an excessive exteriorization through good works” [598] or, to phrase it another way, to reject “love of action for action’s sake.” [599] The interior life is one of inner recollection of God’s Presence at every moment of the day.

Conversion is an ongoing process; thus, we will recognize how the five meanings of conversion are directly connected to the five ways of sanctification and salvation. St. Louis Marie de Montfort reminds us that these five means are “are laid down in the *Gospel*, explained by the masters of the spiritual life, practiced by the saints, and necessary to all who wish to be saved and to attain perfection. They are: *humility of heart, continual prayer, mortification in all things, abandonment to Divine Providence, and conformity to the Will of God.*” [600]

Our Lady: Devotion and Conversion

When the Virgin came to Fatima, God deigned to give the Catholic peoples of the world another incentive toward further conversion of their interior lives or—for those who fell away from or were outside of the Church instituted by Christ—to their initial conversions, the first “age” or “stage” of the life of grace. Through the hands of Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima came the marvelous and unprecedented sign, the great Miracle of the Sun, so that all would believe and act upon her requests. While the complete Fatima Message, the Great Secret, and the Miracle reveal many dogmatic themes, Fatima’s ultimate thesis, the initial secret which the children at first kept to themselves, is true devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, by which many souls will be converted and saved for all eternity.

“Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, chose the incomparable Virgin Mary from among all creatures to be His Mother and deigned to be nourished and governed by her,” explained St. John Eudes. “In His infinite goodness, He also gave her to us to be our Queen, our Mother and our sure Refuge in all our needs. He therefore wishes us to honor her as He honors her and to love her as He loves her.” [601]

The saint continued, “According to the Apostle Saint Paul, Christ is the Head of His Mystical Body, the Church, and we are the members. [602] We

must therefore be animated by His Spirit; we must follow His inspirations, walk the path He has traced, and continue, as it were, His life on earth by practicing the virtues which were His Own. It follows that our devotion to His Holy Mother must be a continuation of His devotion to her.”

Understanding that the “human will is not, however, moved to love a fellow creature unless the intellect first knows what renders it worthy of respect and esteem,” St. John Eudes immediately noted, “The infinite zeal, with which the Son of God is inflamed for all that concerns His dear Mother, has urged Him to reveal to us through the inspired words of Sacred Scripture and through the writings of the Fathers some small measure of the perfections with which He has enriched her. The reality far surpassing our knowledge of her in this vale of darkness will be revealed only in Heaven, the land of unclouded light.” [\[603\]](#)

Particularly compelling is the saint’s initial selection from Sacred Scripture, a passage which he describes as “a compendium of all the great things that can be said or thought of our marvelous Queen.” [\[604\]](#) Moreover, according to the general law of preparation, a term coined by St. Bonaventure to describe the distinctly Catholic doctrine foreshadowed in the Old Testament, it is “God’s Way not to allow the fullness of revealed truth to break upon the world suddenly. There is a long period of adaption, as it were, during which the way is prepared gradually for the final Revelation,” which closed with the death of St. John the Evangelist. [\[605\]](#) Understanding this general law assists those of us who live in the Modern Age to receive a **glimmer of understanding** in how St. John Eudes’ explanations for this passage (and others) apply to the Immaculate Heart as she manifested herself at Fatima (brighter than **the sun**) and the sign that she gave (**the Miracle of the Sun**).

To illustrate the Lord’s revelations about His Virgin Mother, St. John Eudes first chose *Apocalypse*, Chapter 12:1, “***A great sign appeared in Heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.***”

“What is this great sign?” the saint queried. “Who is this miraculous woman? Saint Epiphanius, Saint Augustine, Saint Bernard, and many other holy doctors agree that the woman is Mary, the Queen among women, the Sovereign of angels and men, the Virgin of Virgins. She is the woman who bore in her chaste womb the perfect Man, the God-Man. ‘A woman shall compass a man.’” [\[606\]](#)

The “woman” [a woman clothed with the sun] of *Apocalypse*, as already stated in this work, is a figure-type of the Church, but the eternal Church is herself a type of Mary, who is “**the** woman” prophesied in *Genesis* 3:15. In explaining how *Apocalypse* Ch.12:1 pertains to Our Lady, St. John Eudes outlined the passage’s meaning, of which the following is a brief synopsis.

- The woman appeared in Heaven, because she comes from Heaven; she is Heaven’s masterpiece, its Empress, its joy and glory. [\[607\]](#)

- “She is clothed with the eternal sun of the Godhead and with all the perfections of the divine essence, which surround, fill and penetrate her to such an extent that she has become transformed, as it were, with the power, goodness, and holiness of God.”

- “She has the moon under her feet to show that the entire world is beneath her.” Save the Lord God Himself, none is above her.

- “She is crowned with twelve stars that represent the virtues which shine so brightly in her soul.”

- “But why does the Holy Ghost call Mary ‘a great sign’? It is simply to tell us that everything in her is wonderful, and that the marvels that fill her should be proclaimed to the entire world...”

“Mary is truly admirable in all her perfections and in all her virtues. But what is most admirable in her is her virginal heart. The heart of the Mother of God is a world of marvels, an abyss of wonders, the source and principles of all the virtues which we admire in our Glorious Queen: ‘*All the glory of the king’s daughter is within.*’” [\[608\]](#) And what does this mean? It is a scriptural allusion to the interior life of the soul and, specifically, the Virgin Mary’s. The glory of the King’s daughter was another of God’s opaque references to one of His great mysteries until He fully revealed it to the Church. That secret is the hidden grace of Mary, the Immaculate Conception.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION: MOTHER OF GOD, MOTHER OF MEN

“Hail, full of grace...”

–*The angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, Lk. 1:28*

Since the foundation of the world, God bound together Our Lady and her Divine Son. **The first mystery of Christ** is His Virgin Mother, she who is the Immaculate Conception. This dogma reminds us of St. Paul’s teaching in regard to God’s plan for the Redemption: “All things are done for your sakes” [\[609\]](#) to which St. John Eudes adds, “If He created the world, it was for us, if He became Man, it was *for us*. If He was born in a stable, it was for *our sake*...For *our sake*, He died on the Cross, ascended into Heaven, established Holy Church, confided the sacraments to her care and especially the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar where He resides for us...In a like manner, if He willed to have a Mother on earth, it was for *our sake*.” [\[610\]](#) To the words of the saint must be added, “And if He created His Mother as the Immaculate One, it was for *our sake*.”

The Divine Revelation that Mary is the Immaculate Conception remains the dogma which is most misinterpreted, misconstrued, and belittled. In treating of the confusion and resulting rejection of this most wondrous truth, an early 20th century Jesuit priest and author, Fr. P.J. Chandlery, S.J., recognized that “amongst the chief reasons why even ‘learned and devout men,’ outside the Church, do not understand the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is because they misunderstand the doctrine of Original Sin. **Not knowing the rule, they cannot realize the exception to the rule;** not recognizing the penalty, they cannot see the privilege. In other words, not appreciating what we mean by the stain and guilt of Original Sin, they do not and cannot know what is meant by exemption from it.” [\[611\]](#)

“Great indeed was the injury entailed on Adam and all his posterity by his accursed sin,” wrote St. Alphonsus de Liguori. [\[612\]](#) God had bestowed upon our first parents His sanctifying grace, “a gift to which, by nature, they had no claim. Through the sin of Adam, in which Eve bore her share, this gift was lost for all Adam’s children.” [\[613\]](#) In throwing away the gift that would have been his supernatural inheritance, Adam “also forfeited all the other precious gifts with which he had originally been enriched.” [\[614\]](#)

When through his own fault, Adam lost Original Justice, Original Sin took its place, affecting both body and soul. **St. Thomas Aquinas** taught that

while in the state of justice, “the whole body was held together in subjection to the soul” but, with the fall of Adam, all “the powers of the soul were left, as it were, destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue,” and this “destitution is called a wounding of nature.” [615]

Barred from the Tree of Life and wounded by the four chief effects of his sin (weakness, ignorance, malice and concupiscence), the first father Adam could bequeath to all of his descendants only his fallen human nature, sullied with the Original Sin.

The New Adam and the New Eve

“But from this general misfortune,” wrote St. Alphonsus de Liguori, “God was pleased to exempt that Blessed Virgin whom He had destined to be the Mother of the second Adam—Jesus Christ—who was to repair the evil done by the first.” [616]

A fundamental doctrinal theme of St. Paul’s is that **Our Lord is Adam’s archetype** by way of contrast, for Jesus came to undo the work of Adam and to open the gates of Heaven, long closed to the first man’s posterity as a consequence of the Original Sin. [617] St. Paul speaks of “Adam, who is a figure of him who was to come...But not as the offense, so also the gift. For if by one man’s offence, death reigned through one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ.” [618]

The Teaching of the Catholic Church explains, “A man led to our loss of the sanctifying grace of God; a Man gave us back the gift. Death reigned in the race of Adam; through one born of Adam’s race, true Life was restored to men. Death was the punishment decreed for our first father’s sin; when the Redeemer died, death was found to be the one efficacious remedy for our loss.” [619]

The corresponding doctrine that **the Blessed Virgin is the archetype of Eve** is the teaching of all antiquity, and it was for this reason that St. Ephrem wrote, “Those two innocents, those two simple ones, had been equal the one to the other, but afterward, one became the cause of our death, the other of our life.” [620] Our Lady is “rightly called the second Eve in the same sense that her divine Son is rightly called the second Adam...” [621]

As Adam and Eve were created with sanctifying grace, so were the **New Adam and Eve**. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam and the Son of Mary, was always sinless in virtue of the hypostatic union of His sacred humanity with the Person of the Word. The hypostatic union is the mystery

of the Incarnation of God; it is the reason for the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, the mystery of the perpetual virginity and sacred Motherhood of Mary, and the mystery of the redeeming Cross.

For the sake of the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ which would offer redemption to the human race, the Lord's Virgin Mother was conceived without sin, "redeemed in the highest way—*the way of prevention*—from the shipwreck that involved all the other children of Adam, all our race, in dire catastrophe." [\[622\]](#)

The Redemption of the Virgin

St. Alphonsus was careful to observe, "There are two means by which a person may be redeemed, as St. Augustine teaches us: '*the one by raising him up after having fallen, and the other by preventing him from falling,*' and this last means is doubtless the most honorable." [\[623\]](#)

The sanctified state of the first man and woman prefigure the Incarnation of Christ and the Immaculate Conception. God created Adam from the virginal earth and imbued him with sanctifying grace; He then created the virgin Eve from the virgin Adam. (Here it should be noted that by *virgin* is meant purity not only in the material sense of the body, but also of intellect, heart and soul.)

When Adam was in the state of original justice, the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon him and took one of his ribs to form the first woman, Eve. [\[624\]](#) From the very moment of her existence, grace was imparted to the woman, granted by God through the stainless Adam.

In a similar fashion, the Virgin Mary (the New Eve) received at the very moment of her existence the gift of sanctifying grace, communicated from God through the virginal Jesus (the New Adam). **How was this done**, when Our Lady preceded her Divine Son in historical time?

The answer is found in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God is present to all things that are, were or shall be. What He is and does, He is and does outside of time. To Him, creatures and events which succeed each other in time are ever present. In the great mystery of the Holy Trinity, which our limited human minds cannot fathom, the three Divine Persons applied to Our Lady the foreseen merits of Jesus, *the Word made Flesh*. [\[625\]](#)

To quote the illustrious words of St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "One man and one woman have wrought us exceeding harm; nevertheless, thanks to God, through one Man and one Woman all things are restored...and indeed Christ would have sufficed. Surely all of sufficiency is of Him, but it would

not have been good for us that Man should be alone. Rather, it was fitting that both sexes should take part in our Reparation, for neither sex had been guiltless in our fall.” [626]

“I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house, and the place where thy glory dwelleth,” [627] said King David, for the Holy Ghost inspired him to speak of his future daughter Mary, the living *Temple of God* and *Ark of the Covenant*. For the glory of His name, for the sake of the Incarnation of Christ, and for our sakes, the maiden Mary was prepared for her dignity and office as the Virgin Mother of God, both spiritually and physically, in her soul and in her body. Exempted and preserved from the sin which, as one of Adam’s descendants, she otherwise would have inherited as the naturally generated child of St. Joachim and St. Anne, the Virgin Mary was conceived without sin.

The Immaculate Conception is “the woman,” whose appearance in time commenced the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy against the ancient serpent, the devil: *“I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.”* [628] Created by the Holy Trinity to be the ever-Immaculate Mother of God, Our Lady “was fittingly prepared for the virginal childbearing through which was crushed the serpent’s head.” [629]

“In the Christian religion,” explained Cardinal Billot, “Mary is absolutely inseparable from Christ both before and after the Incarnation: Before the Incarnation in the hope and expectation of mankind; after the Incarnation in the worship and love of the Church. For, indeed, in the primeval prophecy [of *Genesis* 3:15] we were shown not only Christ, but also *the Woman* whose Child He is...” [630]

“The Immaculate Conception means the restoration of grace once more to the human race,” [631] wrote Fr. H. O’Lavery, author of *The Mother of God and Her Glorious Feasts*. “The Immaculate Conception...was the long looked-for event in the history of the world, and from this we may really trace all the good things we have received through the sufferings and death of Christ.” [632]

The Unbreakable Bond of the Woman and Her Seed

“A religion that separates Mary from Jesus—**the Woman from her Seed**—is neither the religion of the promises and prophecies as we read of in the Old Testament, nor the religion of their fulfillment as we see it in the New,”

[\[633\]](#) explains *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*.

Christ is Our Divine Savior, and Mary is our holy Mother. Since the first days of the Church, there have always been those who try to separate Our Lord from His Mother. Just as many who forget that the entire human race was **not** condemned until Adam sinned are blindly inclined to point only to Eve as the reason for mankind's fall, conversely there are those who claim to admit Christ as Lord and Savior but contemptuously dismiss Our Lady's office in the Redemption. Just as the Lord God joined together the first Adam and Eve, whose fates were intertwined, so did He join together the new Adam and Eve in the *proto-evangelium* of *Genesis* 3:15.

To further the points of “**figure-types**” previously made, the historical persons of Adam and Eve can always be positively compared or negatively contrasted to their perfect archetypes, the Lord Jesus and the Lady Mary. Gathered from the Fathers of the Church, the following syllabus clarifies God's binding of the first Adam and Eve and that of “the Woman and her seed”:

- Adam was created before Eve; the Word in Eternity, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity Who said, “*Before Abraham came to be made, I am,*” [\[634\]](#) preceded His human but sinless mother.

- Adam was formed by God from the virginal earth; Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

- Sanctifying grace was bestowed to Eve through Adam; Mary was conceived in grace through the foreseen merits of the new Adam.

- Eve sinned before Adam; Mary was born before Christ.

- Adam and Eve were created in Original Justice but fell from grace; Jesus and Mary were always full of grace.

- Adam and Eve were intended to be the lord and lady over all the earth; Our Lord Jesus Christ and Our Lady Mary possess dominion over all creation.

- Mary is the cause of our salvation, even as Eve was the cause of our ruin.

- “As Eve was seduced by an angel's word to shun God after having transgressed His Word, so Mary, also by an Angel's word, had the good tidings given her so that, after obeying His Word, she might bear God within her.” (St. Irenaeus) [\[635\]](#)

- Adam, who sinned early in his life, sentenced the entire human race to death; Christ, Who died in the flower of His youth, redeemed us for eternal

life.

- Both the Lady Eve and the Lady Mary became “the mother of all the living,” [636] Eve in the natural order, Mary in the order of grace—**for the Mother of God is also the Mother of men.**

In the third century, St. Proclus wrote of the Immaculate Conception, “Mary is the glory of virgins, the joy of mothers, the support of the faithful, the diadem of the Church, the express model of the true faith, the seat of piety, the robe of virtue, *the dwelling-place of the Holy Trinity.*” [637]

The Holy Scriptures relate that when the Virgin Mary, already full of grace, gave the angelic messenger her *Fiat*, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word,” [638] she was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost. The Lord of all was made Man, and “the woman” became *Theotokos* [639] (literally from the Greek, “God-bearer,” or in a variable translation, “God’s mother”). At the moment Our Lady became the Mother of God, she also became the spiritual Mother of all mankind. From that same instant, the new Adam and the new Eve together began the Redemption of mankind.

Those who truly adore Christ also honor the Perpetual Virgin who brought Him forth. In a similar manner, those who possess devotion “to Jesus through Mary” make their own the witness of St. Alphonsus: “The more we honor Mary, the more we shall honor God,” for when Our Lord came to free us all, He did not disdain the humility of the Immaculate Virgin’s womb.

“And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” [640] Born in poverty and adored only by the humble Virgin, St. Joseph, and poor shepherds, the Christ Child would later be sought by wise men from the east, following a star.

“And entering the house, they found the child with Mary, his mother, and falling down they adored him.” [641] So do all the faithful throughout time forever find Christ—always with Mary, His Mother and ours.

THE STAR BEFORE DAWN

“The two truths which stand out like mountain peaks in the chain of revelation concerning Our Blessed Lady, and around which cluster all other truths we hold about her, are her divine maternity and her fullness of grace, both of which are affirmed in the Gospels and in the Councils of the Church.”

–**Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour***

St. Bernardine of Siena once said that “to be the Mother of God is the miracle of miracles.” Total consecration to Jesus through Mary paves a faster path for the three interior conversions. It is a shorter way, so to speak, to make the spiritual ascent of Mt. Carmel. At each modern-day apparition and in different ways, the Lady stressed this truth herself, especially the necessity of conversion. It also seems that the “character” of each successive visitation had much to do with the world’s response or rejection of her previous message.

• **Mary, Conceived Without Sin:** With the first three apparitions of the Modern Age (Paris, 1830, known as Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal; again in Paris in 1840, through which the Church received the sacramental known as the Green “Scapular” Badge, and LaSalette, 1846, where the Virgin appeared weeping), the emerging theme is clear—*conversion* through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who always brings us closer to her Divine Son, Jesus Christ. She would also appear at Lourdes (1854), Pontmain (1871), Pellevoisin (1875), and Knock, Ireland (1879), revealing her divinely bestowed privilege as the Immaculate One and as Mediatrix with her Savior and Divine Son, Jesus Christ. At Lourdes, she directed a young girl to a hidden and miraculous spring. At Pontmain, she appeared just as the small village was on the verge of being raided, and there she silently directed attention to the Holy Cross of Jesus but also providing a discreet reference to her Immaculate Heart. At Pellevoisin, she frightened away a demon, cured the dying visionary, and gave the world another sacramental, the Sacred Heart Scapular. At Knock (the final Marian apparition before Fatima), her silent visage and the tableau in which she appeared leads us to the *Apocalypse*.

It is in our own age that the Secret of Mary is coming to fruition. “It was through Mary that the salvation of the world was begun,” as we recall that which St. Louis Marie noted, “and it is through Mary that it must be consummated. Mary hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ,

in order that men, as yet but little instructed and enlightened on the Person of her Son, should not remove themselves from Him in attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her...But in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Ghost in order that through her Jesus Christ may be known, loved, and served. The reasons which moved the Holy Ghost to hide His spouse during her life, and to reveal her but very little since the preaching of the *Gospel*, subsist no longer.”

[\[642\]](#)

St. Montfort’s inspired prophecy was written in the early 18th Century, in a Europe still reeling from the Protestant Revolt, in a Europe soon to experience the French Revolt against the altar of God and the Catholic throne. The “Catholic conscience of history” (as Belloc coined the term) sees from within; it then understands the series of conflicts were not spontaneous, random events but purposeful advancements of the Great Revolt against God, the Revolt which began in the 1500’s and continues to this day.

The Most Blessed Mother of God chose the 19th century to often make her presence known because in these latter days of the Modern Age, in which the Church Militant is desperately besieged by every heresy, the Holy Ghost is revealing Mary, according to the “general law of preparation,” so that (as St. Louis de Montfort wrote), “through her, Jesus Christ may be known, loved and served.” [\[643\]](#)

**THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL:
“MEDAL OF
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION”**

“O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”
–*Prayer of the “Miraculous Medal”*

The Virgin Mary first came to Paris, formerly the very heart of the French Revolt where the forces of hell had struck at her heel. She appeared to a postulant of the Daughters of Charity on July 18, 1830, the eve of the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, co-founder of the community. The Lady allowed the postulant, whom we now know as St. Catherine Labouré, to kneel before her and rest her clasped hands on her lap, just as a young girl would do with her mother. During the 2½ hour visit, the Virgin spoke of the evil times and foretold coming calamities which took place within the next 40 years, and her words proved true.

“But come to the foot of the altar,” said the Virgin. “Here great graces will be poured out upon all who ask them with confidence and fervor. They will be bestowed upon the great and small.”

“My eyes are ever upon you. I shall grant you many graces. Special graces will be given to all who ask them, but people must pray,” were Our Lady’s concluding words at the end of the first apparition. [\[644\]](#)

The message was clear: The Virgin turned the eyes of her children to the Blessed Sacrament, where God so patiently waits. All we have to do is turn to Him and ask Him for His help with “confidence and fervor” because He wants our love and trust. Furthermore, God is no respecter of persons; the graces distributed are not given according to social status, as the spirit of the world thinks. Finally, the Lady made clear that she herself watches and guards over us. As the Mediatrix of All Graces, she also promises graces but with a condition—“people must pray.”

During her second visit to St. Catherine, in Paris where 40 years prior the godless revolutionaries replaced the Madonna’s statue in the Notre Dame Cathedral with the shameless “Goddess of Reason,” the Lady emphasized both a Marian doctrine, which would be defined as a dogma 24 years later, and her intercessory power before God. It was in Paris that she gave to the world the Medal of the Immaculate Conception (commonly known as the Miraculous Medal).

Our Lady appeared over the high altar, standing on a globe—her feet

crushing a serpent, which immediately calls to mind the proto-evangelium of *Genesis 3:15*: “*I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.*”

The Virgin held a smaller globe with a small cross on top, which she held out as if offering it to God. The Lady explained to Catherine that the ball represented the world, adding, “I am praying for it and for everyone in the world.”

Beautiful rays of many colors and lengths shone from what looked like gems on her fingers. The Virgin said, “The rays are the graces which I give to those who ask for them.” The stones from which no rays came, she said, represented *the graces waiting to be bestowed but for which no one asks*.

This Vision then changed and an oval frame appeared around Our Lady. She lowered her arms and stretched out her hands, graces pouring in the form of light. Around the oval frame appeared words in gold, “*O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.*”

“Have a medal made according to this picture,” the Virgin said to St. Catherine Labouré. “All those who wear it when it is blessed will receive many graces, especially if they wear it from their necks.”

Suddenly, the entire Vision seemed to revolve. On the back of the oval, which denoted the reverse side of the Miraculous Medal, St. Catherine saw the letter “**M**,” surmounted by a cross with a crossbar beneath it. Below the crossbar were two Hearts, one encircled by thorns and the other pierced by a sword. Surrounding the “**M**” were twelve stars within a golden frame.

The symbolism of the two Hearts emphasizes that the **Sacred Heart of Jesus** and the **Immaculate Heart of Mary** are inseparable; the “**M**” underscores the truth that Mary is the cause of our salvation, for it was with her cooperation that **God became Man**. The **symbolism** also emphasizes the Marian doctrine that the Mother of God is the Co-Redemptrix of the human race. The **cross and crossbar** remind us of **the Passion**, while the **12 stars** within the golden frame symbolize the **12 Apostles** commanded by Christ to spread the *Gospel* and baptize all nations. The **12 stars** also symbolize the **12 virtues of Our Lady**, and they may also be a divine hint to *Apocalypse*, Ch. 12: 1, which begins, “*A great sign appeared in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun...*”

THE GREEN “SCAPULAR” BADGE

OF THE IMMACULATE HEART

“Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us now and at the hour of our death.”

–The inscription on the Badge of the Immaculate Heart

In 1840, the Virgin Mary appeared many times in Blangy, Paris, to another Sister of Charity, Sister Justine Bisqueyburu. Our Lady was clothed in a long white robe, over which hung a blue mantle. Her head was unadorned, her hair falling loosely over her shoulders. In her right hand, she held her Immaculate Heart surrounded by flames, with the top of the Heart issuing beautiful rays. In her left hand, she held a badge, a single piece of green cloth suspended from a string of the same color.

On one side of the badge was a miniature replica of the Blessed Virgin, as she revealed herself to Sister Justine. On the other side was a Heart pierced by a sword, surmounted by a cross, and surrounded by an oval inscription: “*Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us now and at the hour of our death.*” Sister Justine described a “heart all ablaze with rays more dazzling than the sun and transparent as crystal”—amazing words which prefigure the description of Our Lady at the Fatima apparitions.

This “Badge of the Immaculate Heart,” which became known as “the **Green Scapular**” (although it is not truly a scapular), was given to the Church as a new sacramental, and Our Lady said it was “for the conversion of those who had no faith and, above all, to procure for them a happy death.” [645] The Blessed Virgin said the badge must be properly blessed by a priest. It can be worn, or placed in the clothing, on the bed, or simply in the room of the person for whom we are asking the grace of conversion. The prayer on the badge should be offered daily, if not by the one wearing it, then by the one giving it. Graces would be given, she said, in proportion to the confidence in which the favors were asked—a very important matter to remember.

OUR LADY WEPT AT LASALETTE

“Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people.”
–*Our Lady of LaSalette*

Four years later, on **Saturday, September 19, 1846**—the eve of Our Lady of Sorrows—the Virgin Mary came to LaSalette, France, there to grant a one-time appearance to two shepherd children. The apparition occurred between **two and three in the afternoon**, a time of great significance because on this day and during this exact hour, the Divine Office prayers were being offered to the Virgin of Sorrows. [\[646\]](#)

Eleven-year old Maximin Giraud and fifteen-year old Melanie Mathieu were tending cows when there suddenly appeared a globe of dazzling light. The globe opened and they saw a woman seated on stones. The Lady’s elbows rested on her knees, her face was buried in her hands, and **she was weeping**.

The Lady wore a crystal-white, floor-length gown, its long, broad, and straight sleeves reaching beyond her fingertips. A golden apron descended to the bottom of her dress. Over the gown, the Lady wore a white cape bordered with roses. On her feet were white shoes, encircled by roses. Her head-dress, too, was white, crowned by a royal diadem, wreathed with roses of many-colored hues.

Around the Lady’s neck hung a golden chain and golden crucifix, with a hammer on one side and a pair of pincers on the other, clearly emphasizing the Passion of Jesus.

Each sentence of the *known* LaSalette Message is intended for all of the Church’s children, regardless of age, and for those outside of the Church, too. The Lady would privately give each child a secret, which they would not reveal to anyone. Eventually they were asked if they would divulge it to the Pope, a suggestion to which both agreed. The two Secrets of LaSalette were entrusted to Pope Pius IX but he never publicly revealed them.

Unlike Sr. Lucia of Fatima, however, Melanie of the LaSalette apparition would later publicly release what she claimed was the secret given to her. While some insist that Melanie became extremely interested in apocalyptic literature which, they further claim, influenced what she revealed as her secret, one must wonder if the opposite is true—that is, if due to the secret given to her, Melanie became interested in apocalyptic writings. Be that as it

may, the most startling part of Melanie's secret are the words allegedly uttered by the Virgin Mary: "Rome will lose the Faith and become the seat of anti-Christ."

Note that she did not say *the Church* herself will become anti-Christ's seat, because Christ promised He would always be with His Church, saying, "...behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. 28:20) However, that promise does not mean that the visible Church will not endure many terrible things, that the city of Rome could not again be overtaken by evil powers, just as it was during the reigns of Caligula, Nero, and Diocletian, or that through the Church's entire history, particular men of the Roman Catholic hierarchy could not apostasize. To the contrary, the Church's human element is comprised of both saints and sinners. Like the Apostle Judas, among the hierarchy there will always be traitors, but such tragedies will never mean the Church herself ceases to exist. Furthermore, in the early days of the infant Church, Catholicism eventually overthrew pagan Rome, so it is to be expected that Satan, who will be the power behind the anti-Christ, wants to reclaim the ancient city that once was his, and which is now the central earthly city of Christ's Church.

Consider the evident lessons taught at LaSalette (although there are many more) in even a quick examination of Our Lady's opening words, reproduced below in exact order:

- **"Come near, my children, be not afraid; I am here to tell you great news."**

- ***The Lesson:*** Our Lady reveals her desire that we approach her in trust, as children approach their Mother.

- **"If my people will not submit, I shall be forced to let fall the arm of my Son. It is so strong, so heavy, that I can no longer withhold it."**

- ***The Lesson:*** When the Virgin spoke of "my people," she spoke as did the queens of old. At the same time she revealed her intercession as the Queen Mother before her Son, Whose arm is raised to punish. The Lady warns the people to submit—that is, to give her Son the love and honor which He rightly deserves as Our Savior.

- **"For how long a time do I suffer for you! If I would not have my Son abandon you, I am compelled to pray to Him without ceasing; and as to you, you take not heed of it. However much you pray, however**

much you do, you will never recompense the pains I have taken for you.”

• **The Lesson:** Although the blessed in Heaven can no longer suffer, Our Lady uses these words to display the gravity of our sins in God’s eyes. Again, she refers to her Son—implicitly revealing her own identity. Once more, she speaks of her prayerful intercession, for which we have been ungrateful. No mere human being can ever offer enough love and gratitude to her Son in His Passion, by which we were bought at a great price, or to His Mother, Our Lady of Sorrows.

• **“Six days I have given you to labor, the seventh I have kept for myself; and they will not give it to me. It is this which makes the arm of my Son so heavy.”**

• **The Lesson:** Here is a great mystery, for Our Lady did **not** say, “The Lord our God gave you six days to labor;” rather, she spoke in the first person. Her words were a discreet reminder that she is the Perpetual Tabernacle of the Holy Trinity; God chooses to speak through her in these latter days. The Lady had referred to the Third Commandment, “Keep holy the Sabbath day,” which means attending the Sacrifice of the Mass and receiving the Sacraments on Sundays and holy days. This commandment also forbids missing Mass through one’s own fault, unnecessary servile work, public buying and selling, or court trials on the Sabbath.

• **“Those who drive the carts cannot swear without introducing the name of my Son. These are the two things which make the arm of my Son so heavy.”**

• **The Lesson:** Our Lady warned of Our Lord’s severe anger when people break the Second Commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” All should use reverence when speaking of God and holy things or matters, and keep oaths made in the name of God. Blasphemy, irreverent or disrespectful use of God’s name, false oaths, and breaking of vows offend against this Commandment.

In essence, while the **Virgin of LaSalette** spoke of many other matters, she made clear that the only remedy is **conversion**—of which the true definition is almost lost in this age: *Christ must be the life of the soul.*

“Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people.” (Our Lady of LaSalette)

THE LADY OF LOURDES

“I am the Immaculate Conception.”

–*The Virgin of Lourdes*

In 1858, Our Lady came to Lourdes, France, appearing 18 times to a fourteen year old girl, who is solemnly canonized under her name in religion, St. Marie Bernard Soubirous, but who is commonly known as St. Bernadette. The Virgin’s message for all was as simple as it was direct: “Pray for sinners” and “Penitence! Penitence! Penitence!” When asked her identity, she did not answer until March 25 (the Feast of the Annunciation, the day the Church joyously celebrates the Word incarnated as man in the Virgin’s womb), saying, “I am the Immaculate Conception.” Only weeks before, the Mother of God had instructed the young girl to dig at a spot on the grotto floor. There came forth a spring, hidden until that time, which has bestowed graces of spiritual conversions and physical cures.

Due to the simplicity of the Lourdes message, it is all too easy to overlook it. The life of the chosen messenger, however, shows us the heroic degree to which God wishes us to seek sanctity. Since St. Bernadette was the first 19th visionary who was, during the apparitions, known upon sight and constantly interrogated (unlike St. Catherine, whose identity as visionary of the Miraculous Medal was not known even by her Mother Superior), who reached heroic heights of holiness in a brief 36 years (unlike Melanie and Maximum of LaSalette, who were always faithful Catholics but did not attain Bernadette’s degree of virtue), and whose life was carefully scrutinized when she was still on earth, we will take a slight detour to briefly visit with the spiritually and literally incorruptible maiden of Lourdes.

ST. BERNADETTE: A LIFE OF THE BEATITUDES

“Humility is the secret of God’s glory.”

–*St. Bernadette*

In reading the lives of the saints, St. Bernadette once mused, ““I think that they ought to point out the faults the Saints had and indicate the means they employed to correct them. That would be helpful to us. We would learn how to set about it. But all that is mentioned is their revelations or the

wonders they performed. They cannot serve our advancement.” [647]

However, her most famous biographer, Abbé Trochu, did not quite agree. “She failed to add that, even so, these imperfect authors are to be commended for raising the pre-eminent qualities of the Saints, and that she found in them examples to imitate. The Church in its infallible decisions was one day to adopt the well-founded verdict of a Superior General of Saint-Gildard: ‘It is my own opinion that during her life Sister Marie-Bernarde [the saint’s name in religious life] put into practice the virtues that constitute sanctity.’” [648]

What is sanctity? It is the “state of Christian perfection,” which is the result of a “fervent surrender of one’s self to God and the practice of virtue. It does not require extraordinary works. The Blessed Mother of God, the most holy of mortals, never performed any extraordinary works to excite worldly admiration. *‘Love is fulfilling of the law.’”* [649]

A saint is a person who “fulfills all the demands of the law” (Rom. 13:10) which is accomplished by charity, the virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbors as ourselves. Charity is considered the queen of all virtues, since it is the one virtue that will always exist in Heaven. In the Beatific Vision, souls will no longer possess any need for the other virtues. Charity, however, will remain, since it perfectly unites God and man, just as it perfectly unites man to man. [650] Those souls who are canonized as saints by the Catholic Church are those who were known to practice all of the virtues to a heroic degree—i.e., heroic virtue.

What is meant by heroic virtue? Pope Benedict XIV, “whose chapters on heroic virtue are classical,” thus describes it: “In order to be heroic, a Christian virtue must enable its owner to perform virtuous actions with uncommon promptitude, ease, and pleasure, from supernatural motives and without human reasoning, with self-abnegation and full control over his natural inclinations.” The 1910 *Catholic Encyclopedia* comments, “A heroic virtue, then, is a habit of good conduct that has become a second nature, a new motive power [that is] stronger than all corresponding inborn inclinations, capable of rendering easy a series of acts each of which, for the ordinary man, would be beset with very great, if not insurmountable, difficulties.” [651]

In reading the lives of the saints, time and prayer are needed to assess, study, and contemplate in them the supernatural virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost. In addition, “the Holy Ghost also grants certain

extraordinary gifts, which are given only on rare occasions and to selected persons. Such extraordinary graces are granted principally not only for the benefit of the recipient, but of others.” Among these graces are included the gift of visions, of miracles, and of prophecy.

In St. Bernadette—handmaiden of the Lord’s Handmaiden, the Blessed Virgin Mary—we will discover all of these things: the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity); the four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude); the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord), the twelve Fruits of the Holy Ghost (charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, and chastity) and the extraordinary graces of visions, miracles, and prophecy. Of St. Bernadette’s many virtues and gifts, only a few examples will be spotlighted—especially her fortitude and long-suffering.

The Saint’s Early Years

Bernadette Soubirous, the firstborn of her parents, was born about two o’clock in the afternoon, as the bell was ringing for Vespers on Sunday, January 7, 1844 in Lourdes, France, a small market town near the Pyrenees in the country’s southwest. Her parents had named her Bernarde Marie, but the priest who baptized her kept referring to her and registered the name as Marie Bernarde. Her father reminded the priest that the child’s name was already registered at the Town Hall as Bernarde-Marie, but history shows that the priest never did change the register. Her family, however, considered her first name to be Bernarde, although she was called by the diminutive of Bernadette.

As for the parents, neither had ever gone to school but they were known to be good Catholics who faithfully carried out their religious duties and respectable people of irreproachable integrity. Of the nine children born of the marriage between Louise Castérot and Francois Soubirous, not all lived to adulthood.

In Bernadette’s sixth year, she began to suffer from asthma, which afflicted her until the end of her life. She was small for her age but she was a happy and lovable child with a sweet smile. She easily took to caring for her younger siblings so her parents could work. She, like her parents, received no education.

By her tenth year in 1854, the family was in serious financial straits. For various reasons, their mill was lacking customers and so the father sought

odd jobs, as did her mother. Bernadette remained at home, taking care of her younger siblings. (On an important and related note, it was in this same year that Pope Pius IX defined as a dogma the Immaculate Conception.)

In the saint's 11th year of life, Bernadette became one of many children who were stricken by a cholera epidemic. Since cholera is usually fatal, her recovery truly must have been a miraculous one. In her 12th year, her godmother Aunt Bernarde took her home, where she was fed well but also became nurse-maid to her younger cousins. Once again, her education was neglected. Her aunt would later say that Bernadette knew the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, and the *Credo*. However, she had never been taught to read, so her only prayer book was a small Rosary.

By the winter of 1856, Bernadette insisted on returning to her family. By this time, the Soubirous became so impoverished that they were forced to accept the free lodging of a cold, damp room known as *Le Cachot* (The Dungeon), once used to hold prisoners. Everyone in the town knew the family's situation, but this "was an age of scant help for the poor. For example, no conference of St. Vincent de Paul was established in Lourdes till 1874 (three years before Bernadette's death). It was a harsh age when too many of the wealthy, lacking pity because they lacked the *Gospel*, exploited the labour of the poor; and mothers of large families received only ten *sous* for a whole day's work!" [\[652\]](#)

Bernadette's father found work from day to day with the baker or the horse-and-coach service, while her mother worked in the fields, or gathered wood in the forest and later sold it to buy bread, or did the washing and housework for people in town. Previously, Bernadette and her sister Toinette stayed at home, caring for the younger brothers. Now, however, Toinette at age ten was able to attend school with the Sisters of Charity of Nevers, who had come to Lourdes in 1834.

For her part, the 13 year old Bernadette would often say that books were not meant for her, that the Sisters did not know in which class to put her since she could not read and could hardly scratch out a few letters. There was also her asthma and the fact that she was needed at home. Her only real desire for herself was the reception of her First Holy Communion.

Little Shepherdess of Bartres

Louise Soubirous thought of what seemed to be a good solution. In June of 1857, Bernadette was sent to Bartres, to the household of Marie Lagües, who had been Bernadette's wet-nurse after Louise suffered an unfortunate

accident with a candle. As a baby of 10 months of age, Bernadette was brought to live with the Lagües and there she stayed until her 20th month of life. Considering Marie's supposed affection for the child, as well as her home's proximity to church and school, Louise had thought it would be easier for Bernadette to attend school and catechism at Bartres. In reality, however, Bernadette again became a nursemaid, this time to her former "foster mother's" four young children. By August, she was also entrusted with the care of the family's lambs, and so she became a shepherdess. When school opened in September, she was not sent to class. Instead, she was given the additional care of the sheep.

What this meant was that the young girl worked from sunup to sundown, caring for children in the early morning and spending the rest of the day outside, in good weather or bad, with the sheep and lambs. At first, she was allowed to attend some catechism classes and the Sunday Masses and holy days. However, her inability to read and her legitimate exhaustion made it difficult for her to memorize the catechism. Bernadette was a responsible worker, she never complained, she asked for nothing, and she gratefully accepted whatever was given to her. This made it easy to treat her as an unpaid servant, working for her bed and board. The true purpose for which she was sent to her former wet-nurse was neglected. A priest, the brother-in-law of Mr. Lagües, did intervene on Bernadette's behalf, telling his sister's husband that he was not treating Bernadette as one of the family. The reproach had little effect. Rarely was she seen at catechism, and never was she seen in school.

It was during these solitary days as a shepherdess that Bernadette made a stone altar at the foot of an old chestnut tree, setting on top of it a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There she would kneel, praying the Rosary with a gift given to her by her mother—a set of poor black beads, threaded on plain string. She would play with the flock of lambs and then, resting, her eyes would fall on the valley; her ears heard the rustling of the trees, the occasional bird song and the other sounds of nature. "God made all that," she would think to herself. She did not know she was in the very early stages of meditation or that God was already preparing her soul. She was to be another handmaiden of the Immaculate Mother of God.

In early January of 1858, Bernadette's 14th birthday found her still at the house of the Lagües. Circumstances continued as they had since August. She still helped with the children, she still retained the entire responsibility of the

flock, and she still was not receiving any form of proper catechesis and education.

In humility, Bernadette did all that was asked of her, and she did it well, but eventually her ardent longing for her First Holy Communion began to manifest itself. At least three times, she asked to be brought home, through verbal messages given to her visiting Aunt Bernarde, a neighbor from Lourdes who was passing through the area, and the Lagües servant who one day took a trip to Lourdes. For the Soubirous, however, the situation was no better, so their daughter's entreaties fell on deaf ears. Finally, Bernadette took matters into her own hands.

On a Sunday near the end of January 1858, she requested permission to go to Lourdes. Although given consent, she was instructed by the Lagües to return the very next day. She came back three days later, humbly yet forthrightly explaining, "I must go home. The parish priest is going to have the children prepared for First Communion, and if I go back to Lourdes, I shall make mine." In this one example, one should easily recognize Bernadette's fortitude, that "moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause." [\[653\]](#)

Within two weeks upon Bernadette's return to Lourdes, the Queen of Heaven would appear to this poor, neglected, and uneducated child. As we have seen, she was obedient, meek, and conscientious. She had never insisted upon anything for herself—until now. Her only longing was a spiritual one, and that was to receive Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. Bernadette was humble and set her sight not on material riches but only those of the interior life. At the age of 14 years, her brief life was already one of which Our Lord taught in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [\[654\]](#)

The Lourdes Apparitions Begin

"At fourteen, not knowing how to read or write, a complete stranger to the French language and ignorant of the Catechism, Bernadette looked upon herself as the most worthless child of her years." [\[655\]](#) On Thursday, January 28, 1858, the young Bernadette returned to her parents, joyfully exclaiming, "Now at least I shall be able to go to school and Catechism! That's why I've

come back.” [\[656\]](#)

Circumstances were no better for the Soubirous family, but her parents gave their promise. The next day, Bernadette was in school. Upon hearing the child’s motive and determination, the Sisters enrolled her as a future communicant.

Coincidentally, on Thursday, February 11, 1858—exactly two weeks after her return because she greatly desired her First Holy Communion—the humble girl was graced to see a “most beautiful Lady.” Bernadette would see this Lady a total of 18 times, the last vision occurring on July 16, 1858 (the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel).

That particular Thursday was a school holiday, so Bernadette was home with her family. Although a bitterly cold day, the air was still and there was no wind under the sunless sky. Shortly after 11 a.m., Bernadette set out on a necessary, tiresome task, accompanying her sister Toinette and a younger, impulsive classmate, Jeanne Abadie. The trio went in search of two things: fallen branches and twigs that they could rightfully take and use in the Soubirous’ fireplace and old bones to sell to the rag-and-bone man. [\[657\]](#) Their expedition led them into a forest and then over a foot-bridge to the Lafitte family’s property, which formed an island. One side was enclosed by a bend in the Gave River, the other by a canal which powered a saw-mill and flour-mill, called the Savy. The extreme point of the triangle was a tall, rocky formation known as “Massabielle” (Old Hump).

Massabielle was “naturally shaped into an arch from which a cave ran backwards, and to the right, about fourteen feet up, there was a small niche where a wild rosebush was growing.” [\[658\]](#) In the spring season, the bush was “ablaze with white blooms.” This wild outgrowth of rock, with its little oval niche, was also called “the grotto.” In the small space before the grotto, Bernadette was forced to wait, as her healthier companions decided to remove their shoes and stockings, cross the freezing cold stream, and continue their search for dead branches and discarded bones.

They were already on the stream’s other side when, anxious to help, Bernadette resolved to join them. She removed her shoes in anticipation of walking through the water. “I had hardly begun to take off my stocking when I heard the sound of wind, as in a storm.” [\[659\]](#) (Two days later, Fr. Pomian, the assistant priest to Fr. Peyramele, the parish priest at Lourdes, was particularly struck by Bernadette’s mention of the “sound of wind, as in a storm.” It reminded him of *Acts 2:2*, when the Holy Ghost descended upon

the Virgin and the Apostles: “And suddenly there came *a sound from heaven*, as of *a mighty wind coming*, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.”)

Although the trees across the way were not moving at all, Bernadette said, “I had half-noticed, but without paying any particular heed, that the branches and brambles were waving beside the grotto.” She returned to removing her stockings when she again heard the same sound of wind, this time in front of her. She looked up and saw the branches and brambles “underneath the topmost opening in the grotto tossing and swaying to and fro, though nothing else stirred around.”

The Beautiful Lady at the Grotto

It was within the oval niche that Bernadette saw a “golden cloud” and then a beautiful light, instantly followed by “a girl in white, no bigger than myself, who greeted me with a slight bow of the head; at the same time, she stretched out her arms slightly away from her body, opening her hands, as in pictures of Our Lady; over her arms hung a Rosary.” Bernadette described that the Lady was “smiling at me most graciously and seemed to invite me to come nearer. But I was still afraid. It was not, however, a fear such as I have had at other times, for I would have stayed there forever looking at her; whereas, when you are afraid, you run away very quickly.”

The Lady wore “a white dress reaching down to her feet, of which only the toes appeared. The dress was gathered very high at the neck by a hem from which hung a white cord. A white veil covered her head and came down over her shoulders and arms almost to the bottom of her dress. On each foot, I saw a golden rose. The sash of the dress was blue and hung down below her knees. The chain of the Rosary was yellow; the beads white, big, and widely spaced. The girl was alive, very young, and surrounded with light.” [\[660\]](#)

When asked for additional details, Bernadette would also describe the girl’s face as oval in shape and of “an incomparable grace.” The Lady’s eyes were blue, and her voice, “Oh, so sweet!” The Rosary held by the Lady was not the usual length for the *Psalter* of all 15 decades but a five-decade Rosary. As Bernadette prayed the Rosary, the Lady let her own Rosary slip through her fingers, silently counting the beads with Bernadette. The Lady, however, did not pray the *Our Father* or the *Hail Mary*, but she did pray the *Glory Be*.

Abbé Trochu, St. Bernadette’s foremost biographer, noted: “This last detail, which the little one in her ignorance could not have invented, reveals

an accurate and deep theological truth. The *Gloria*, which is a hymn of praise to the Adorable Trinity, and is Heaven's Canticle, is indeed the only part of the Rosary suitable for her, whose name Bernadette would not learn for another month. The *Pater* is the prayer of needy mortals, tempted and sinful, on their journey to the Fatherland; as for the *Ave*, the Angel's greeting (to the Virgin Mary), this could be used only by the visionary, as the Apparition had no need to greet her own self." [661]

Note well that it was at Lourdes that the Queen of Heaven first offered to the people of the Modern Age a "concession," as it were, since she emphasized the *daily* Rosary, which is only *one-third* of Our Lady's Psalter.

Centuries before, Our Lady had said to St. Dominic, "Preach my Psalter." By these words, she meant the Angelic Psalter of 15 decades, with each decade—comprised of one *Our Father* and ten *Hail Mary's*—prayed while meditating on the 15 Mysteries from the Incarnation of Jesus Christ at the Annunciation of the Virgin to the Coronation of Our Lady, assumed into Heaven.

Why was there, at Lourdes, a silent emphasis on the Rosary of five decades, rather than the Psalter of fifteen? Was it a matter of great significance in Mariology (for St. Bernadette, although illiterate, prayed the Rosary every day)—or had the Merciful Mother of God made allowances for the spiritual sloth of the Modern Age? Perhaps both inquiries form the answer because, many decades later, **Sr. Lucia of Fatima** would reveal **"...the Most Holy Virgin, in these last times in which we live, has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary...** There is **no** problem, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary. **With the Holy Rosary**, we will **save** ourselves. We will **sanctify** ourselves. We will **console Our Lord** and **obtain the salvation of many souls.**" [662]

In the first two apparitions, the Lady did not speak to Bernadette, although she greeted the girl with a noble, yet inviting, bow of the head. During the third apparition, the Lady spoke for the first time, asking Bernadette, "Will you do me the favour of coming here for a fortnight?" [663] Bernadette said, "After asking permission from my parents, I will come," to which the Lady replied, "I do not promise to make you happy in this world, but in the *other*" (a literal French-to-English translation).

As Bernadette would soon understand, the Lady did not state that she herself would always appear. Rather, the request applied only *to* Bernadette.

A brief summary provided by the first inquiry of the ecclesiastical Commission which later investigated the Lourdes apparitions thus states: “Bernadette was faithful to her appointment: she went most punctually to the grotto for a fortnight. She always obtained the same favours there, except on two days when the Apparitions did not appear.” It was from this time forward that the young Bernadette was “accompanied by an ever increasing crowd. When she had the happiness of seeing the Vision, she forgot everything: she no longer noticed what was taking place around her: she was entirely absorbed.” [\[664\]](#)

This World and the *Other*

As for the Lady saying, “I do not promise you happiness in this world, only in the *other*,” her words quickly became self-evident. From the first day of the Apparition and until the end of her brief life, Bernadette would suffer misunderstandings, humiliations, false accusations, open derision, and many other trying circumstances.

For example, when her mother, Louise, first heard the story from the younger sister, Toinette, she questioned Bernadette and then took a rod to discipline both girls. At school, a much younger student slapped Bernadette across the face, while some of the teaching sisters taunted her to learn her catechism from the Lady. For many hours, the secular authorities would discourteously treat her, not even offering her a chair while they interrogated her. Even Fr. Peyramele was, at the first, very gruff with Bernadette.

Throughout her life, Bernadette was many times cross-examined about the Apparitions. In fact, she “wrote and signed numerous accounts of her visions. In addition, she underwent repeated interrogations by both ecclesial and civil authorities, during which her testimony was transcribed. In none of these accounts did she contradict herself; on the other hand, there is no one single version that includes every detail.” [\[665\]](#)

What is consistent is Bernadette’s fidelity to testifying to the Virgin’s message and in living it. In the total of 18 apparitions, the Blessed Mother spoke perhaps a handful of times. Once, she delivered three secrets that were for Bernadette alone—“a commission which, on her deathbed, she [Bernadette] declared she had carried out.” [\[666\]](#) For the public, however, the main message was one of penance, prayer for the conversion of sinners, and a request that the priests build a chapel and that processions come to the grotto. There was also the Lady’s gift, through the hands of Bernadette, of a hidden spring of water where graces of spiritual and bodily healing are to this day

bestowed.

When the fortnight ended, the Lady had still not identified herself. During that interim, Bernadette had, at Father Peyramale's insistence, requested two things of the heavenly visitor—her name, as well as a sign to confirm that the Apparition's request for a chapel was truly from God. On Thursday, February 25, 1858, the Lady had already instructed Bernadette, "Go and drink at the spring and wash yourself in it." It was on that day that the miraculous spring of Lourdes came forth. To the request for her name, however, the Lady only gave Bernadette a gentle smile.

After March 4, Bernadette felt no inner call to return to the grotto until March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation. When she arrived, she found the Lady was already waiting for her. On this day, Bernadette thrice implored the Lady for her name. Then came the final confirmation of Lourdes, for the Lady raised her eyes to Heaven as she joined her hands, brought them close to her heart, and said, "I am the Immaculate Conception." After the briefest moment, she then smiled at Bernadette and disappeared.

Life after Lourdes

The Holy Communion so ardently desired by Bernadette was received on the Feast of Corpus Christi. Then, on July 16, the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, the Lady appeared to Bernadette one last and unexpected time. To deter pilgrims, civil authorities placed boards around the grotto, including the spring. Bernadette was by the Gave River when suddenly the Lady appeared: "I saw neither the boards nor the Gave. It seemed to me that I was in the grotto, no more at a distance than the other times. I saw only the Holy Virgin. I had never seen her so beautiful." [\[667\]](#)

Bernadette's actions during the apparitions emphasized both the Rosary and humiliating penance for sinners, but the Vision's requests also tested her humble piety, fortitude, spirit of penance, and perseverance. Thus her coming years were foreshadowed, for she would continue to practice and interiorly grow in these and many other virtues.

The future saint was well aware that the grace of seeing the Mother of God did not grant her automatic access to Heaven. She would later write in her spiritual diary: "Often remind yourself of this word that the Most Holy Virgin said to you: *Penance! Penance!* You should be the first to put it into practice. For this intention, suffer trials in silence so that Jesus and Mary may be glorified..." [\[668\]](#)

Bernadette learned to read, write, embroider, and sew. She became a

Sister of Charity and Christian Instruction at Nevers, France, and was given the name of Sister Marie-Bernard. She worked in the infirmary as a nurse's aide, and was later given the lighter task of altar sacristan. In the convent, she lived a life of both interior and physical suffering. She was often ill and frequently misunderstood and humiliated by her superiors and, on occasion, her fellow sisters. Abbé Trochu noted that "for the space of eleven years –much as she was esteemed and loved by her companions –she had been subjected to an undeserved coldness by those in authority over her. She always refused to speak of her suffering, which was a mixture of bewilderment and pain. She put up submissively with being reprimanded in public and more frequently than was her share." [\[669\]](#)

Due to Bernadette's lack of higher education and her frequent illnesses, to cite just two examples, she was called a "good for nothing" and "a lazy lie-abed." Deeply hurt by such uncharitable comments, Bernadette never retaliated, although on occasion she might respond with a brief, appropriate remark. Once, when a passing superior flung a quick jest that the ailing Bernadette needed to arise and get about her business, the saint calmly replied, "It is my business to be ill."

St. Bernadette understood that hers was an apostolate of suffering. A brief glimpse into her diary reveals the concealed gem of her interior life: "My divine Spouse has made me desire a humble and hidden life. Jesus has often told me that I will not die until I have sacrificed all to Him. And to convince me, He has often told me that when it is over, He alone, Jesus crucified, will console me." [\[670\]](#)

At the young age of 35 years, on April 16, 1879, St. Bernadette died an agonizing death from tuberculosis of the bone. She was canonized by Pope Pius XI on December 8, 1933. Enclosed in a glass casket in the convent chapel in Nevers, France, her incorrupt body sleeps, as it awaits its reunion with her holy soul at the final Resurrection.

What was the secret of Bernadette? She tells us in her own words: "To love what God wills always, to will it always, to desire it always, to do it always: this is *the great secret of perfection*, the key to paradise, the foretaste of the peace of the saints!" [\[671\]](#)

OUR LADY MARY, THE EVENING STAR OF PONTMAIN

“But pray, My children. God will hear you in a short time. My Son allows Himself to be touched.”

–*Our Lady of Pontmain*

On the cold, snowy and clear starlit night of January 17, 1871, in the little village of Pontmain, the “Evening Star” appeared in France, just as the shadows of night literally and figuratively fell upon the country. What led to this beautiful event is a great lesson to the entire world.

France was suffering a horrendous conflict, the Franco-Prussian War. “The Third Empire of Napoleon III was no match for the Prussians under Bismarck. Paris was surrounded on September 18, 1870. On December 27, the siege began in earnest and the city was under daily bombardment. The Parisians were starving, desperate, and in deadly fear of being blown to bits. People in other parts of France lived in fear of invasion.”[\[672\]](#)

By the New Year of 1871, the Germans occupied two-thirds of France. On January 15th, the Prussians were at the gates of Laval. The panic-stricken farmers hid their food and possessions, expecting further Prussian advances. In addition to the sufferings of war, the deadly diseases of typhoid and smallpox broke out. [\[673\]](#)

In these terrible hours of trial, the faithful gathered by the hundreds to beg the Virgin’s intercession with her Divine Son, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. At Our Lady of Victories, at LaSalette, at Lourdes, in their parish churches and in their homes, the faithful prayed their Rosaries fervently, imploringly.

Not far from Laval, the village priest of Pontmain, Curé Michel Guérin, who held a great devotion to Our Lady, led the weeping, disconsolate people to pray to the Virgin, under her title *Our Lady of Hope*.

“Let us add penance to our prayers, and then we may take courage,” the Curé urged his small flock. “God will have pity on us. His Mercy will surely come through the Virgin Mary.” [\[674\]](#)

First Phase of the Apparition: A “Grand, Beautiful Lady” and a Triangle of Three Stars

On the evening of January 17, 1871, around 6 p.m. (the hour of the

evening Angelus), Mr. Barbedette and his two younger sons, Eugène (12 years) and Joseph (10 years), were working in the barn. When a neighbor lady came to give them news of the war, Eugène walked to the barn door to observe the weather.

Suddenly, the boy stood transfixed. About twenty or twenty-five feet above a neighbor's home, he beheld what he called a **“grande, belle Dame”** (“a grand, beautiful Lady”).

The Lady appeared to be between 18-20 years old. Her face was small and beautiful. Her long gown was dark blue, much darker than the blue of the surrounding sky. It fell in loose folds; the sleeves were loose and hanging. She wore soft slippers fastened with golden ribbons. Over her head was a soft, black veil upon which rested a golden crown, which widened toward the top, and a red band wound around it. Her arms were at her sides and the palms of her hands were turned outward. The Lady was smiling at the child.

The father and the neighbor could not see anything, but ten-year old Joseph exclaimed, **“Oh, I see a beautiful Lady!”** and described her dress in detail. The mother, when summoned, also did not see the Lady but, at her suggestion, the family knelt and prayed five *Our Father's* and five *Hail Mary's*. Then they went into the house to eat supper. As soon as supper was finished, the boys rushed back to the barn and then fell to their knees. Three orphan girls from the village boarding school were brought without being told why. Two of them saw the Lady, but a third did not.

As events unfolded that night, it became clear that no adults would see the Vision. What the adults could see, however, were three bright stars forming a triangle, exactly where the children beheld the Lady. The children said the highest star was over the Lady's head, while the other two stars were near each of her elbows. Those three stars were seen by everyone that night *—but they were never seen again.*

Soon, about eighty people from the village had assembled at the barn door. The good Curé arrived, but he did not see the Lady. However, a little boy in ill health, Eugène Friteau, beheld the Vision. Due to his delicate condition, he could not stay long in the cold air. Two months later, he died.

A two year-old girl, the little daughter of Boitin, the shoemaker, clapped her hands as soon as she was at the front of the barn door. **“Le Jésus! Le Jésus,”** she happily exclaimed. These were the only words she knew to describe such a sight. Thus, the only visionaries out of the six that could later relate what happened numbered four—the two Barbedette boys and the two

girls from the Catholic orphanage.

**Second Phase of the Apparition:
Symbols and a Message Written in Gold**

With the arrival of the Curé, a small red cross appeared over Our Lady's Heart. Then the apparition became surrounded by an oval frame of a blue darker than the robe. Four candle holders were attached to the inside frame, two near the bottom sides and two near the top sides. Each holder held an unlighted candle.

The people talked amongst themselves as the children related these wonders. Suddenly, the children announced that the Lady had stopped smiling and was now looking sad. The Curé said, **"If the children only are privileged to behold the celestial vision, it is because they are more worthy than we are."** He then suggested that they pray. Everyone knelt down—some in the barn, some outside. No one seemed to mind the cold or the snow. When Sister Marie-Edouard, one of the sisters from the orphanage, led the Rosary and the people joined in prayer, the Lady smiled again.

As the Rosary prayers grew more fervent, the Vision began to grow larger. As the Lady grew taller, the blue frame extended in proportion, and the stars of the sky appeared to move aside, one by one rearranging themselves outside the frame but beneath her feet.

The children counted forty of these stars, stars visible only to them. Then other stars appeared at a distance from the apparition, coming to fasten themselves to the Lady's dress.

"Oh, there are so many stars the Lady will soon be gilt all over," one of the children cried with excited awe.

When the Rosary was completed, Sister Mary Edouard began the *Magnificat*. Before the first verse was sung, the children exclaimed, **"Something is happening!"**

A plain white band appeared and unrolled itself across the length of the house's roof. It was about a yard wide. Then a stroke of gold appeared. It was a letter of the alphabet.

"It's an M!" the children cried. **"And now there is another letter— it's an A!"**

The word *Mais* was formed. Other letters appeared. Before the *Magnificat* was concluded, the children read the words aloud: *Mais priez, mes enfants* ("But pray, my children").

At the exact moment the word *priez* ("pray") appeared, Joseph Babin, a

villager returning from the neighboring town of Erneé and who had heard the singing, came to investigate, saying, “You do well to pray to the good God! The Prussians are at Laval!”

“If they were at the village entrance, we should have no fear now!” several villagers answered. When this man was told of the apparition, he went to his knees and joined the group in their prayers.

At the Curé’s direction, the people now sang the Litany of Loreto. More letters appeared. The next part of the message read: *Dieu vous exaucera en peu de temps* (“God will hear you in a little while”).

Next, the *Inviolata* was sung. At the words, ‘O Mater alma Christi carissima,’ a second line of letters appeared on the white banner. The children read aloud the new words they saw: *Mon fils* (“My son”).

Upon hearing the children call out these two words, many began to weep. **“It really is the Blessed Virgin! Yes, yes, it really is she! It is Our Lady!”** the people exclaimed.

As the *Inviolata* ended, the people began to sing the *Salve Regina*. The rest of the sentence appeared and read: *Mon fils se laisse toucher* (“My Son allows Himself to be touched”).

Completed now, the entire message read as follows: **“But pray, My children. God will hear you in a short time. My Son allows Himself to be touched.”** Although she said not a word, Our Lady’s appearance and her golden message, mysteriously written on the white banner, gave hope and consolation to her afflicted children in France.

Third and Fourth Phases of the Apparition: A Mystical Harp, a Red Crucifix and the Holy Name of Jesus

At the Curé’s suggestion, the people sang the canticle, *Mère de l’Espérance* (Mother of Hope). The smiling Lady lifted her hands to shoulder-level, her fingers delicately moving in time to the hymn, as though she was playing an invisible instrument. At the canticle’s end, the children related that the banner with its golden words faded away.

With the beginning of the next hymn, the Virgin’s face suddenly became sad again. A red crucifix appeared near Our Lady. The Body of Jesus on the Cross, covered with blood, was clearly seen. As the people sang the words, “*Spare us, O Lord,*” Our Lady took the crucifix in her hands and slightly tilted it toward the children. At the top of the crucifix appeared the words, *Jésus Christ*, in red letters on a small white banner.

A small star gracefully rose from beneath the Virgin's feet, lighting the candle at the lower left of the frame and then the top one. Passing up and over Our Lady, it then lit the candles on the right side. The star moved outside the blue frame, only to rest over the Virgin's head.

Fifth Phase of the Apparition:

Two White Crosses and a Mysterious Veil

As the crowd sang another hymn—*Ave Maris Stella* (Hail, Star of the Sea)—the crucifix disappeared and the Vision again assumed the attitude of Our Lady on the Miraculous Medal, with one difference—on each of the Virgin's shoulders appeared a small white cross, both about eight inches high. When the hymn was finished, the Curé said, "Now let us all say our evening prayers."

When the people began the nightly *Examination of Conscience*, the children noted that a white, scroll-like veil began to rise from beneath the Lady's feet. Little by little, the Virgin was hidden from view, until she disappeared from sight.

It was a quarter past nine. The apparition [\[675\]](#) had lasted more than three hours.

Ten days later, the armistice was signed. [\[676\]](#)

Meanings of the Apparition's Symbolism

Theologically-rich treatises could address each symbol and aspect permeating the Pontmain apparition, including but not limited to:

- The three stars (the Holy Trinity; the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity).
- The dark blue of Our Lady's dress (the color signifying fidelity to God),
- The forty stars at Our Lady's feet (recalling the Israelites' forty days in the desert, the Holy Family's forty days of seclusion before the Christ Child's Presentation in the Temple, Our Lord's forty days of fasting, the forty days of Lent).
- The four candles (the four marks of the true Church, which is one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic).
- The simple yet eloquent message written on a white banner in gold letters (the traditional liturgical colors of the Christmas season).
- The changes in the Virgin's countenance and in the apparition's development, in clear response to the people's attitudes, actions, and even to

particular prayers and hymns.

- The red crucifix and the Holy Name of Jesus Christ, reminding the people of the priceless value of the Precious Blood of Our Savior.

While there is much more that could be said of each “sign,” only one other facet will be explained in somewhat greater detail.

Our Lady’s seeming play of an invisible instrument recalls the teaching of St. John Eudes, “The mysterious harp of King David...is another symbolic picture of the Holy Heart of Mary...The strings of this royal harp are the virtues of Mary’s Heart.”[\[677\]](#) He further explained, **“Sacred Scripture tells us that King David employed his harp on four great occasions and we see Jesus, the Son of David, using His Mystical Harp [His Mother’s Immaculate Heart] to accomplish *four* infinitely greater achievements.”**[\[678\]](#)

- First, the mere sound of David’s harp “put to flight the evil spirit which possessed Saul.” [\[679\]](#) Similarly, Christ uses the virtues of Mary’s Heart to free the human race from the evil dominion of Satan.

- “Second, David used his harp to sing many psalms and canticles to the honor and glory of God.” Likewise, the Immaculate Heart offers “five types of canticles to praise the most Blessed Trinity.” These five canticles are: **1)** of love, “the strongest, purest, most perfect love that ever was or shall be,” [\[680\]](#) **2)** of praise and thanksgiving “for the benefits of Divine goodness on behalf of all creatures, for the Blessed Virgin Mary did not limit herself to thanking God for the infinite favors she received from His Hand, but she praised Him unceasingly for the graces He pours on all created things,” **3)** of sorrow, anguish and bereavement at the sufferings and the death of her Son, **4)** of triumph for all the victories won by herself as general of the great King’s armies over His enemies and, we may truly say, over Himself, having so often disarmed divine vengeance when it stood ready to destroy the world and punish it for its innumerable crimes,” and **5)** of prophecy, “to announce the great designs of God for the future...” [\[681\]](#)

- Third, King David used his harp to praise God with joy. “In like manner, Christ, the second David, not only attuned His holy Mother’s Heart to praise and bless His divine majesty in every way, but He also induced Mary to seek her joy and bliss exclusively in His praises, and in all the acts she performed for His glory and in His Service.” [\[682\]](#)

- Fourth, King David’s harp “attracted other men to the praise of God, with hearts full of joy and gladness like his own. So, too, Christ the King

attracts innumerable souls to the love and praise of His heavenly Father by the sweet sound of His precious harp—that is, by means of the blessed Heart of His glorious Mother.” [\[683\]](#)

The Evening Star, Our Lady of Hope, the Immaculate Heart—Mary chose to implicitly manifest these three titles at Pontmain. The Evening Star guides her children through the darkest nights, so they will not lose their way. Our Lady of Hope teaches us to approach her with confidence. And her Immaculate Heart, as she would later promise at Fatima, is our refuge and the path that leads us to God.

Of Our Lady Mary, the Evening Star, it can be truly said, “*May she be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out.*” [\[684\]](#)

**THE VIRGIN OF PELLEVOISIN:
LADY OF MERCY,
LADY OF THE SACRED HEART**

“I choose the little ones and the weak for my glory.”

–*Our Lady of Pellevoisin*

“God has willed that all things come to us through Mary,” as St. Bernard of Clairvaux once wrote. That Our Lady always leads us to her Divine Son is proven repeatedly throughout history—in Tradition, in Scripture, and in true apparitions of the Modern Age. Five years after the Virgin came to Pontmain as the Evening Star and Mother of Hope, she again came to France—this time as the Lady of Mercy and of the Sacred Heart.

The story began in Paris when 32 year old Estelle Faguet, lady’s maid to the Countess Arthur de La Rouchefoucauld, fell gravely ill in May, 1875. The diagnosis was pulmonary tuberculosis, acute peritonitis, and an abdominal tumor. [685] Estelle would later speak of her sufferings, not only of body but of the mind. During her long illness, she often made acts of resignation to God’s Will, but then—when worrying about her parents and her orphan niece, of which she was the sole support—she would, as she said, falter in her heart.

“In the first days of September, after having begun alone several novenas, she made what she called her *last will*,” notes a late 19th century book in which Estelle’s memoirs are included. “A small grotto in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes had just been erected in the park at Poiriers. Estelle wrote a letter to the Blessed Virgin and, as she was unable to take the missive herself, she asked Mademoiselle Reiter to place it at the feet of Our Lady’s statue, concealing it well under the stones.” [686] Fifteen months later, this same letter would be found among the shrine’s stones and brought to Estelle’s employer, the countess. [687]

By December, the doctors had no hope for her. Her employers, carefully tending to her spiritual and physical needs, moved her to one of their homes in Pellevoisin. With a growing abdominal tumor and advanced consumption (tuberculosis), Estelle became so ill that even food and water caused her intense suffering. On February 10, 1876, the doctor said that she had only hours to live. She had already received the last sacraments. Although in great agony, Estelle was perfectly conscious and perfectly resigned. [688]

On Sunday evening, the 13th of February, Estelle requested that a candle

be lit for her intentions at the local shrines of Our Lady of Victories and Our Lady of Lourdes. Her requests were honored the next day, Monday, February 14.

When Tuesday morning arrived, the still-suffering Estelle told the parish priest that the Blessed Virgin had come during the night. The priest, knowing that the patient was literally in her last agony, felt she might be hallucinating. On Wednesday, she said the Lady had again returned, this time promising her cure. The priest remained unconvinced. Estelle's anguish continued but, just as she said, it was on Saturday—Our Lady's Day—that she was miraculously cured.

**“Fear Nothing;
You are My Daughter”**

On February 19, 1876, the very day after her health was completely restored, Estelle wrote of what happened to her in the early hours of February 14: “I was trying to rest when suddenly the devil appeared at the foot of my bed. He was horrible, and at once began to make grimaces at me. I had scarcely perceived him when Our Blessed Lady appeared on the other side, at the corner of my bed. She wore a pure white woolen veil, which fell in three folds. I can never describe how beautiful she was; her complexion white and rose-tint, rather pale. Her sweet gentle eyes reassured me somewhat but not completely, for the devil, seeing the Blessed Virgin, drew back, dragging the curtain and the iron rod of my bed. This increased my terror, which became unendurable. I crouched down in bed. [The demon] did not speak but turned his back on me.” [\[689\]](#)

“The Blessed Virgin spoke to him sharply: ‘What brings you here? Do you not see that she wears my livery and that of my Son?’ He disappeared, gesticulating. Then she turned to me and said gently, ‘Fear nothing; *you are my daughter.*’ Then I remembered that from the age of fourteen, I had been a Child of Mary. I now felt less fear.”

“Have courage; be patient,” the Lady continued. “My Son will allow Himself to be prevailed upon. You will suffer five days longer in honor of the five wounds of my Son. On Saturday, you will either be dead or be cured. If my Son restores you to life, I wish you to publish my glory.”

During the next night, the Blessed Mother came again, this time to tell Estelle she would be cured on Saturday “because of your resignation and your patience.” However, Our Lady also reproved Estelle for the faults she had previously committed in this regard. They had seemed only small lapses

or imperfections, but the grace of the Virgin's presence allowed the sick young woman to understand that any sin offends the good God. Of this revelation regarding her venial sins, Estelle wrote, "I would have longed to cry out for pardon but I could not; my grief overcame me...Oh, how sad I felt."

On the third evening since the first apparition, the Mother of Mercy appeared, again reassuring the mortally-ill Estelle, "By your resignation you have expiated your faults...Your good works and fervent prayers have touched my mother's heart, among others that little letter you wrote to me in September. What moved me were the words, '*See the sorrow of my parents. If I fail them, they are on the eve of begging bread. Remember, then, what you suffered when Your Son Jesus was stretched out upon the Cross.*'" [\[690\]](#)

The fourth visitation was very similar to the third. During the fifth appearance of the Virgin Mary, Estelle asked if she should change her state in life.

"One can be saved in every state," the Lady answered. "Where you are, you can do a great deal of good." Then she spoke of what afflicts her most—"the want of respect shown by some people to my Divine Son in Holy Communion and the attitude taken for prayer, when at the same time the mind continues occupied with other things. I say this for people who pretend to be pious." With those words, the Mother of Mercy disappeared—and Estelle found herself cured.

Estelle's Prayer to Our Lady of Mercy

Not only did Estelle immediately write of what transpired in the five days before her wondrous restoration to perfect health, on the same day she also wrote a most beautiful prayer to the Virgin Mary, which we may make our own:

"O my good Mother, behold me in Thy hands. Look with pity on Thy poor servant. Do not permit the designs of Providence toward my unworthy self to be frustrated by my infidelity to grace. May Thy Jesus, Who dwelt in Thy Heart, and Who has this day deigned to visit mine, be my salvation and my only support. May He subdue in me that pride which has so often nearly caused my ruin. May He root out of my heart every evil inclination and completely destroy everything that does not tend to His glory and Thine.

"Most Holy Virgin, Who hast shown Thy power by granting me health of body, heal also my soul, so often the slave of sin. O my powerful

Protectress, Thou Who art, after God, my consolation, Thou Who didst soothe my pain, Thou Who art the light of my soul, having revealed all my iniquities to me; Thou Who art my treasure, my strength, my joy, the hope of my life and of my eternal salvation, Thou hast said to me: *You are my daughter*.

“Thou canst not then reject my prayers. Deign to grant them and to have compassion on me as befits the Mother of my God, Who has shown such love and goodness to men. He is their Father; He has appointed Thee their Mother.

“Since Thou hast deigned to place me among Thy own privileged children, obtain for me all the grace necessary for the salvation of my soul. I promise Thee in return, O my good Mother, to do all in my power to become more worthy of Thy favors. Amen.”

The Messages of Pellevoisin

Estelle would see the Virgin Mary ten more times before the year's end, with the last apparition occurring on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Though no other person beheld the apparitions, Estelle's ecstasies were witnessed by many credible individuals, from lay people of high station to those in religious life.

What is particularly striking about the 15 Pellevoisin apparitions is Our Lady's solicitude for Estelle's person in her trials of soul and body. While the Virgin gently reproved Estelle in regard to her faults, often with a motherly smile, she also impressed upon her daughter the particular virtues she needed to practice. The Lady would insist that Estelle remain calm, by which she meant holy indifference—that is, a total lack of self-interest—in order to instill in the visionary's soul a greater love and confidence in God. In setting before us the example of Estelle, whose long-suffering eventually led to true resignation and ultimately her marvelous cure, the Blessed Mother was again telling the world that Our Lord knows and loves each one of us, so very intimately.

In the first five visits granted to Estelle before her complete healing, Our Lady not only showed herself as the Mother of Mercy, but also as the terror of demons. As St. Alphonsus wrote in a prayer to the Blessed Mother, “I do not fear devils for thou art more powerful than the whole of hell.”

At Pellevoisin, the Virgin Mary again revealed herself as Mediatrix of All Graces. It was in the last few apparitions that Estelle saw drops like rain falling from Our Lady's hands, in a manner similar to the 1830 visions of St.

Catherine Labouré.

Above all, however, the Blessed Mother first pointed to Jesus Christ, for at the first apparition she spoke of “the Five Wounds of My Son,” and by the last apparition, she would give the Church the sacramental known as the Sacred Heart Scapular.

Just as with any of Jesus’ or Mary’s expressions or actions as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, a series of sermons could be preached on every sentence uttered by the Virgin at Pellevoisin. Our Lady’s words, [691] given below in the order in which she spoke them to Estelle Faguet, were also intended for all poor sinners whom the Immaculate leads to Jesus, Our Lord and Savior:

- “If my Son has allowed Himself to be prevailed upon, it is because of your resignation and patience.”
- “I am all merciful and the Mistress [692] of my Son. Your good works and fervent prayers have touched my mother’s heart.”
- “If you want to serve me, be simple, and let your actions correspond to your words.”
- “One can be saved in every state (of life). Where you are, you can do a great deal of good...”
- “What afflicts me most is the want of respect shown by some people to my Divine Son in Holy Communion and the attitude taken for prayer when at the same time the mind continues occupied with other things. *I say this for people who pretend to be pious.*”
- “They will treat you...as a fool, but pay no attention to that. Be faithful to me; I will assist you.”
- “Be calm, my child, have patience. You will have sorrows, but I will be with you.”
- “His Heart bears so much love for mine, that He cannot refuse me any requests. Through me, He will touch the most hardened hearts.”
- “Is not your cure the proof of my power?” she asked, smiling, and then she added, “I am come especially for the conversion of sinners.”
- “For a long time, the treasures of my Son have been open; let them pray.” Saying this, Our Lady lifted from her breast a white scapular, on which there was the Sacred Heart of Jesus, saying, “I love this devotion.” She paused, and then she said, “It is here that I will be honored.”
- “Let them pray: I show them the example.”
- “I will remember the efforts you have made to be calm. It is not only for you that I ask this, but also for the Church and for France. In the Church,

there is not the calm I desire. Let them pray and let them have confidence in me.” Growing sad, the Lady then said, “And France, what have I not done for her? How many warnings, and yet she has refused to listen! I can no longer restrain my Son. France will suffer. ” Then pausing once more, she said, “Courage and confidence. I have arranged all beforehand. So much the worse for those who may not be willing to believe you. Later on, they will recognize the truths of my words.”

- “I choose the little ones and the weak for my glory.”
- “You have not lost time today; you have worked for me.” (Estelle had hand-made a Scapular of the Sacred Heart, duplicating it as it was shown to her during the visions.)
- “My child, remember my words. Repeat them often; may they strengthen and console you in your trials.”
- Of the Sacred Heart Scapular, Our Lady said, “...nothing will be more acceptable to me than to see this livery on each of my children, and that they all must endeavor to repair the outrages received by my Son in the Sacrament of His Love. See the graces I will bestow on those who will wear it with confidence, and who will assist you in propagating it. These graces come from my Son; He can refuse me nothing.”

As the Virgin spoke those last words, Estelle saw an abundance of rain-drops fall from Our Lady’s hands, and in each drop could be read such graces as *piety, salvation, confidence, conversion, health*, and many others.

“What more proper to excite in our hearts both the contrition of our sins and love of God, than the sight of this (Sacred Heart) Scapular with the crown of thorns, the cross, and the jet of blood and water! Pellevoisin is the complement of Paray-le-Monial [the 16th century apparitions of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, wherein Our Lord Himself asked for devotion to His Sacred Heart]...it is also the echo and resumé of the century in which Our Heavenly Queen came to request prayer and penance.” [\[693\]](#)

VISION OF SILENCE: OUR LADY OF KNOCK AND THE APOCALYPSE

“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour.”

–*Apocalypse 8:1*

When during a downpour of rain, the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and St. John the Evangelist appeared in the tiny hamlet of Knock, County Mayo, Ireland, the trio said not a word. The date was Thursday, August 21, 1879, the eve of the octave of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. [694] Emanating a brilliant light that all could see, the one-time apparition took place outside, at the southern gable of a small church dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Any villagers who saw the light and came to the site beheld the vision, the symbolism of which appears to point to Chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse*.

The Knock events began at seven o'clock that August evening when a 15 year-old girl, Margaret Beirne, was sent to lock the church doors. Upon completing her task, she noticed a brightness over the building. Probably due to the inclement weather, she didn't investigate but hurried home. Mary McLoughlin, the priest's housekeeper, was on her way to visit Margaret's mother, the Widow Beirne, and passed within some distance from the church. Though the skies were grey, she noticed an unusual light by the south gable. In this radiance, she could see three figures of the Virgin, St. Joseph, and a bishop. Walking in the pouring rain to visit the Beirne family, she thought perhaps Fr. Cavanaugh had ordered new statues for the church. While at the Beirne home, she never thought to mention the event.

Between eight and a quarter after the hour, Miss McLoughlin concluded her visit. Mary Beirne, the older sister of the young doorkeeper, offered to walk with her. As they passed the church, Mary Beirne saw the light and the figures, and then asked Miss McLoughlin about the beautiful new statues. As both got closer to the church, Mary noticed the figures were moving and exclaimed, “They are not statues; they are moving. It's the Blessed Virgin!”

“Between the wall enclosing the church grounds and the church itself was an uncut meadow; three persons were seemingly standing on top of the small grass, about a foot or two from the snow-bright gable wall. They could not be statues, as their feet did not press down the meadow grass that supported them.” [695] At the suggestion of the practical housekeeper, the

awe-struck Mary Beirne immediately ran home to tell her family. Within the next hour, Miss McCloughlin left the apparition to inform Archdeacon Cavanaugh who, to his life-long regret, did not that evening come to the church.

For his part, Archdeacon Cavanaugh, pastor of the church, was deeply devoted to the Immaculate Conception, and it is said he often referred to the Virgin as “the ever Immaculate Mother of God.” [696] He also had a great devotion to the poor souls in Purgatory, for whom in May of that same year, he “commenced to offer one hundred Masses for them; this act of charity he completed on the very morning of the most memorable day Knock was ever to know.” [697] Later that day, he visited parishioners in outlying districts, but a heavy drizzle began in the afternoon and by 7 p.m. became a downpour. Exhausted and drenched, Fr. Cavanaugh misunderstood his housekeeper. He would always regret it, but he later reflected, “If I had seen the apparition and if I had been the first to speak of it, many things would have been said that cannot now be advanced.” [698]

What the People Saw at Knock

In the small village, word quickly spread, with the result that fourteen people, ranging in age from six to seventy-five, later testified before the Diocesan Commission that they had seen the apparition. Among the fourteen were three children (one girl and two boys), six women, two teenage boys, and three men. A fifteenth witness, Patrick Walsh, lived half a mile away from the church. He reported that about 9 p.m. that night, he saw from his field a great golden light by the church which he did not investigate. When he made inquiries the next day, he was told of the apparition. [699]

What those who did investigate saw that night were three dazzling figures, standing about two feet above the ground but a little distance from the gable. To the left and behind the figures was an altar with a large cross. On the altar, in front of the cross, a young lamb stood, its face toward the west. Around the altar were hovering angels; their wings fluttered and their faces were at all times turned toward the altar and away from onlookers.

Speaking as an official witness, Mary Beirne stated, “The altar was under the window, which is in the gable and a little to the west near the centre, or a little beyond it...The altar appeared to be like the altars in use in the Catholic Church, large and full-sized. It had no linens, no candles, nor any special ornamentations; it was only a plain altar.” [700]

All three figures were clothed in an indescribable silvery white and, as

14 year old witness Patrick Hill phrased it, “the figures were full round as if they had a body and life. They said nothing; but as we approached them, they seemed to go back a little toward the gable.” [701]

“Our Lady’s robe, strikingly white, was covered by a large white cloak that fastened at the throat and fell in ample folds to her ankles. On her head was a brilliant crown surmounted with glittering crosses and over the forehead where the crown fitted the brow was a beautiful rose. She held her hands extended apart and upward, in a position that none of the witnesses could have previously seen in any statue or picture, *‘in the same position as a priest holds his hands when praying at holy Mass,’*” as one witness phrased it. [702] Her feet were bare, one was slightly poised ahead of the other. The Virgin’s eyes were cast upward toward heaven; she seemed to be praying.

At Our Lady’s right stood St. Joseph, his hair and beard slightly grey, his head respectfully inclined toward the Virgin. At her left was St. John the Evangelist, vested as a bishop and wearing a short mitre, similar to that of the eastern-rite patriarchs, instead of the taller bishop’s mitre of the western Church. Standing at an angle to Our Lady, St. John was also at the *Gospel* side of the altar and the lamb. In fact, Mary Beirne said that “his right arm [was] inclined at an angle outwardly, towards the Blessed Virgin.” [703] In his left hand, he held a book, while the index and middle fingers of his right hand were raised, in the manner of a Catholic priest giving a blessing or a speaker who is making a point.

Three of the witnesses (a boy, a young teen man, and a woman) dared to go inside the church wall and right up to the apparition. Young Patrick Hill went up very near to the three figures, later saying: “I distinctly beheld the Virgin Mary, life size, standing about two feet or so above the ground.” After describing her clothes and positioning, he said, “I saw her eyes, the balls, the pupils, and the iris of each.” He moved closer to St. John and looked at the pages of the book, stating, “I saw lines and letters.” [704] The written language he beheld was unknown to him.

During the apparition, none of the witnesses spoke to each other, but each responded to it in their own way. The 20 year-old sacristan Dominic Beirne, a brother of Mary’s, was so moved that manly tears sprang from his eyes. An older woman, Bridget Trench, was so taken with the Virgin that she cast herself at the Lady’s feet, trying to embrace them. But she felt nothing, for her arms seemed to grasp empty air. And so she remained there, on her knees before the Mother of God, praying the Rosary for over an hour.

During the entire time of the apparition, there was no let-up of the teeming rain. Everyone also noticed that the figures themselves and the grass beneath were not wet. Bridget Trench later confirmed she had carefully felt the ground under the Virgin but, despite the downpour and the wind blowing from the south, it was perfectly dry. In addition, unlike other true apparitions, this one did not disappear from sight. Instead, due to the weather and the late hour, the people began to leave, one by one, around 11 p.m. The last to leave was the elderly Bridget who, in her simple faith, did not want to go but believed that the heavenly figures would always remain there.

The Secret of Knock

At Knock, Our Lady appeared as both Queen and Mediatrix. Her hands, as previously mentioned, were raised in the exact manner of a priest saying the Holy Mass. A priest acts as intercessor for the people. At every Marian apparition of the Modern Age, the Virgin has in some way implied her power as Mediatrix. At Knock, so intent was her prayer of intercession, that she kept her eyes uplifted toward the God that she always sees; not once did she look down upon the people.

“The mission of Mary to Knock was not one of rebuke or complaint against the people...Neither was it a call to do penance...No, Mary’s mission to her faithful Irish people that day was rather one of compassion and comfort, with an implied admonition, no doubt, of dangers ahead, and the imperative need of prayer,” wrote the Very Rev. Jarlath Royanne, O.Cist. [705] But this implied admonition, as we shall see, was not only for the good Catholics of Ireland.

“The two saints who appeared with Mary were the two people—next to Our Lord Himself—who were the most closely associated with her while she was in this world.” [706] St. Joseph, her most chaste husband, cared for her and protected her and Jesus. He is the head of the Holy Family, the model of husbands and fathers, protector of virgins, patron of a holy death, and Patron of the Universal Church.

St. John, the only apostle to stand with Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross, was the one to whom Jesus gave His last earthly command, “Behold thy mother.” [707] On the day Our Lord died, St. John represented every disciple of Jesus. And so he took the Virgin Mary to his own. In the Church, St. John is known as the Virgin’s son in the order of grace, the “beloved disciple,” “the one whom Jesus loved,” and the apostle of the Sacred Heart, for which cause St. Ambrose said of him, “It is not strange that St. John

should have spoken better of the mystery of the Incarnation than the others did; he lived at the source of heavenly secrets.” [708]

Recall that at Knock, “St. John was garbed as a bishop and reading from a Mass book. He stood next to the altar on which was the sacrificial lamb. St. John was Our Lady’s priest. After the Resurrection, he celebrated Mass for her, renewing the sacrifice of Calvary, bringing her Son down upon the altar.” [709] All of these points are imperative, but there is something more to be considered of St. John’s role at Knock: In his entire manner, the saint seemed to be stressing a matter of great importance, as though he was reading aloud from the book in his hand.

Therefore, if one wishes to understand the message of Knock, one must read the *Apocalypse*. How is this known? The answer is the living lamb on the altar. Consider that in his *Gospel*, St. John twice records that Our Lord’s precursor, St. John the Baptist (for whom the church was named), hailed Our Lord as “the Lamb of God.” [710] However, 28 times in the *Apocalypse*, the Evangelist himself refers to the risen Savior as “lamb.” [711]

The second hint is the silence of the Vision of Knock. Chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse* opens with this verse: “And when he had opened the seventh seal, **there was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour.**” We recall that in the Scriptures, the word “heaven” denotes the kingdom of God on earth, the Church—i.e., there was silence *in the Church*, as it were for half an hour. The Haydock commentary states [of the words] “*there was silence in heaven*: which is to represent as it were a general consternation, and an expectation of dreadful events at the opening of the seventh seal, and when seven Angels stood prepared to sound seven trumpets.” [712]

In writing of the *Apocalypse* and the silent message of Knock, the Rev. Fr. James, O.F.M., Professor of Philosophy at the University College of Cork, observed, “The artistry is that of Mary. She would have us see, in the apocalypse of Knock, the eternal issue of that struggle which is the crisis within every other crisis that takes place in time. There are many who do not even know in what that crisis consists; and that is part of the tragedy of the present situation. But it is nothing less than the eternal struggle of the archenemy of mankind for the possession, body and mind and spirit, of a humanity that belongs to Mary.”

“To the people of that time, emerging out of a dark night when they had proved their fidelity to the Mass, the sacrifice of Redemption, it was given as a consolation and the poor old woman who expressed her gratitude was the

voice of Ireland. But to the people of the present time, confronted with a new menace, the apparition at Knock is a challenge. It is no longer a question of offering the sacrifice of Redemption upon a bare rock, without the externals of religion, but of extending this very sacrifice of Redemption into lives that are fully and militantly Catholic. Catholic in the true balance of prayer and action, of contemplation and apostolate; Catholic in their social as well as their individual activities. To be worthy of the faith of our Fathers, and of the Queen of heaven who has come to us, Knock must become a school where we shall learn **the secret of true sanctity**; then we shall go forth from it in the secure and conscious protection of Mary who is Queen of the Church on earth as she is Queen of the Church in heaven.” [\[713\]](#)

And so we return to Fatima, the crown of all Marian apparitions of the Modern Age, where Our Lady gave a Great Secret, of which Sr. Lucia said was in the *Gospel* and the *Apocalypse*, once specifically referring to *Apocalypse* chapters 8-13. If, as it seems, the silent message and symbols of Our Lady of Knock were also doing the same, the Mother of God was alerting us to the knowledge that the half-hour’s silence in heaven (the Church) would soon begin. It was not until 1917, when the third stage of the Great Revolt against God arrived with the rise of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, that the Lord deigned to give the peoples of the world another incentive toward conversion when the Virgin came to Fatima.

Through the hands of Our Lady of the Rosary came the marvelous and unprecedented sign, the Great Miracle of the Sun. While the complete Fatima message, the Great Secret, and the Miracle reveal many dogmatic and doctrinal themes, Fatima’s thesis is true devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary who, like her figure-type Queen Esther of old, wishes to save God’s people from spiritual and physical annihilation. It is through this Immaculate Heart that countless souls in Russia and, later, other nations will be converted and saved.

For the sake of our **own** ongoing conversions and that of our fellow sinners, may we heed Our Lady’s many requests for prayer **and** sacrifice. As the modern-day battle for souls increases in intensity, it shall certainly be as Sr. Lucia once said, “...the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary will arrive when a sufficient number of people have fulfilled the message.” [\[714\]](#)

PART 17

The Dominion of the King and Queen

“It is certain that only Jesus Christ, God and Man, is King, but Mary as Mother of the King and associated to Him in the work of divine redemption participates in His royal dignity.”

-Pope Pius XII, Radio Message to Fatima on May 13, 1946

Since veneration of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart honors Our Lord’s Sacred Heart, it is probably no coincidence when at Fatima the Virgin Mary first chose to reveal her Immaculate Heart, cruelly pierced by a circle of thorns, during the second apparition in the month of June, the month of the Sacred Heart. With this singular symbolic imagery, the Queen’s Immaculate Heart identified with that of her Son, Savior, and King. Pope Pius XII expressed the depths of these mysteries of the King and Queen in the following way: “**Jesus is king** of the Eternal Ages **by nature** and **by right of conquest**; *through Him, with Him, and subordinate to Him*, **Mary is Queen by grace, by divine relationship, by right of conquest and by singular election**. And her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God, since nothing is excluded from her dominion.” [\[715\]](#)

Jesus, King of the Eternal Ages

“We lisp like children when we speak of things divine,” [\[716\]](#) especially when we speak of the very nature of God. Still, because our faith teaches that Divine Revelation is a world of mystery but not of contradiction, we believe all that God has revealed to us, including the truths about Himself. [\[717\]](#)

Jesus is King of the Eternal Ages because in His Divine Nature, He is God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Alpha and Omega. In the Old Testament, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity was not formally revealed but only foreshadowed, as this book earlier mentioned, in accordance with what St. Bonaventure called “the general law of preparation.” This law refers to the way God provided Divine Revelation to make ready the human race for His “undoing of the awful consequences of Original Sin, taken in conjunction with man’s response to God’s overtures.” [\[718\]](#) This “law of preparation”

applies to all the truths of Faith, including the Revelation of the Holy Trinity as well as the Lord's plan of Redemption.

The first implicit hint of the Old Testament's "law of preparation" for the revelation of the Triune God appeared in the history of creation when the Lord said, "Let *us* make man to *our* image and likeness." [719] St. Augustine noted similar utterances from God about His plurality: "Behold, Adam is become as one of *us*," [720] and "Let *us* go down, and there confound their tongue." [721] The triple *Sanctus* of Isaias, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of Hosts," and the triple blessing recorded in Numbers, [722] are also opaque heralds of the sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity, but there are many others.

The law of preparation was also heard in paradise lost, with the Lord's veiled promise of "the woman...and her seed." [723] In His curse upon the serpent, the Lord God uttered the prophecy of the *proto-evangelium*, the first good news: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: *she shall crush thy head*, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." [724]

Although our first parents could not know that four thousand years would pass before the fulfillment of the Lord's words, much less understand their full meaning, this first prophecy foretold the Virgin Mary ("the woman") and Jesus Christ ("her seed"). In the *proto-evangelium*, God bound together Mother and Son, the Mediatrix and the Redeemer of the human race.

Christ is King by Nature as God and Man

Before His Passion, Jesus made clear His *Divine* Nature when He said, "Before Abraham was made, *I am*." [725] The Second Person of the Holy Trinity, He is "the Word," the Eternally Begotten, consubstantial with the Father. St. John the beloved Evangelist phrased this mystery very simply: "*In the beginning, the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" [726]

"It has long been a common custom to give to Christ the metaphorical title of 'King,' because of the high degree of perfection by which He excels all creatures," [727] explained Pope Pius XII, affirming what the Church has always taught: "Christ—our Teacher, our Priest and Redeemer—is our King by reason of His eternal Divinity, but he is also King *as man*." [728]

When Christ chose to assume a *human* nature, the Word Incarnate received from the Godhead the royal dignity as the rightful attribute of His humanity. [729]

As the Church also teaches in *Quas Primas*, Christ is King by right of nature as Man because He gave His Life to offer us Redemption.

Accordingly, He has the right to rule in the hearts and the wills of men because He has purchased us “with a great price.” [730] It is “by His grace and inspiration He so subjects our free will as to incite us to the most noble endeavors.” [731]

“He is the *King of hearts*, too, by reason of His ‘charity which surpasseth all knowledge.’ (Eph. 3:19)...But if we ponder this matter more deeply, we cannot but see that the title and power of King belongs to Christ as Man in the strict and proper sense, too. For it is only as Man that He may be said to have received from the Father ‘*power, and glory, and a kingdom*’ (Dan. 7:14), since the Word of God [Jesus]...has all things in common with Him, and therefore has necessarily supreme and absolute dominion over all things created.” [732]

Christ is King also by right of conquest: “But he is King of men by a special title, for we are His subjects by right of conquest. Under the domination of Satan, reduced to the servitude of sin from that fatal moment in which Adam sinned, involving us all in his ruin, we have been freed by Christ from captivity, and we are now justly subject to his salutary rule.” [733]

“The Son of God, Who made us, was made one of us: and He rules us as Our King, because He is our Creator, Who made us,” said St. Augustine. “As King, He fought for us, as Priest He offered Himself for us...In Him, let us rejoice.” [734]

Christ’s Kingdom, As It Should be on Earth

The Kingship of Christ is, above all, spiritual in character and, as Pope Leo XIII declared, it is exercised “by truth, by justice and, above all, charity.” [735] Jesus said His kingdom is “not of this world” but it is both spiritual and temporal. On earth, His Kingdom is the Catholic Church, the One Supernatural, Supra-national Society. The Lord’s Kingdom reigns within each of the Church’s members who live in the state of sanctifying grace: “*For lo, the kingdom of God is within you.*” [736]

Christ’s Temporal Kingship is also intended to be shared by the rulers of natural governments, because God “wants order in the works of His hands. So the world is meant to mirror forth, however imperfectly, the unity of the Mystical Body in heaven, for the social life [of Heaven] of which we are meant to prepare here on earth,” as explained by Fr. Fahey. “Accordingly, the history of the world...turns around the social acceptance and rejection of the Kingship of Christ, and thus the attitude of States to the one supernatural

society and to the Indirect Power of the Catholic Church is the keystone of the arch of the world's social order.” [737]

“We lost supernatural life by original sin and we need Divine Grace that we may live an ordered life,” as Fr. Fahey reminds us, “yet this society proclaims that one can be a good man and true while utterly indifferent to the source of grace, Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Divinity.” [738]

In giving our complete fidelity to Christ, we cooperate with His work because “... it is for Jesus Christ as King, in virtue of the work of Redemption which He must accomplish, to conquer His Kingdom and defend His faithful subjects against the enemies who strive to overthrow His reign here below.” [739] **Christ's authority in the temporal order** “is not here a question of commanding and legislating in view of conducting human society to its common good in the natural order, which belongs to the civil power, but of opposing everything that could hinder **the progress of the supernatural life and the social order consonant with it**, and of obtaining from the rulers in the civil order the cooperation necessary therefore. This power forms part of the attributes of the Spiritual Kingship, for it is at its service and is, so to say, its instrument.” [740]

His Spiritual Kingship is also “militant and the struggle against moral evil must go on as long as men remain here below exposed to suffering and death, to corruption and sin. Only in eternity shall the triumph be complete, by the victory of the good and the defeat of the wicked...[but] we must keep in mind the twofold aspect of Christ's Headship: the *negative* aspect of His combat against sin and His wearing down of evil, which belongs to His Kingship, and the *positive* one of uniting souls to God, which is the function of His Priesthood.” [741]

Upon Christ, therefore, Who is Mediator, Prophet, Priest, Savior and King, all things converge. All creatures are subject to Him, and He offers His Sacred Humanity and Divinity as King and Priest to the Father. “All things are put upon Him,” says St. Paul, “...and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” [742]

Why Mary is Queen

Our Lord also gave to the Church and each individual soul His Mother, the Queen of Heaven and the Help of Christians. As Pope Pius XII stated, “Mary is Queen by *grace*, by *divine relationship*, by *right of conquest* and by *singular election*. And her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God,

since nothing is excluded from her dominion.”

- **Our Lady is Queen by grace** because, through the foreseen merits of her Son and Savior, she was preserved from Original Sin from the first moment of her existence. She is the Immaculate Conception, who never committed the slightest actual sin. Our Lady was not only conceived in sanctifying grace, but that grace grew abundantly as her life progressed; it is for this reason that the angel Gabriel saluted her, “Hail, *full of grace*.”

- **She is Queen by divine relationship** because God chose her to be His Mother, the cause of salvation. The central and primary truth of Christianity is the fact that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” [743] That God would become Man was the great secret, “hidden from ages and generations,” [744] until it was manifested at Bethlehem when the Christ Child was found “with Mary his Mother.” [745]

Our Lady’s relationship to each Person of the Holy Trinity explains her divine relationship. She is the first adoptive daughter of *God the Father*, Who created her highest in grace because she was to be the Virgin Mother of *God the Son*. She is the Virgin Bride of *God the Holy Ghost*, Who “infused into her soul the gifts of grace merited by the Son [Rom. 5:5] and miraculously brought about the conception of the Divine Word in her womb.” [746]

- **She is Queen by right of conquest and by singular election** because Our Lady, the New Eve, gave free consent to her office in the mystery of the Incarnation and in the work of Redemption. The fulfillment of the *Genesis* 3:15 prophecy of “the woman...and her seed” commenced with the Virgin’s *Fiat*, “Be it done to me according to Thy Word.”

Of the natural and supernatural unity between the Savior and His Mother, Pope Benedict XV wrote, “To such extent did Mary suffer, and almost die with her suffering and dying Son; to such extent did she surrender her maternal rights over her Son for man’s salvation, and immolated Him—insofar as she could—in order to appease the justice of God, that we may rightly say she redeemed the human race together with Christ.” [747]

Pope Pius XI stated, “From the nature of His work, the Redeemer ought to have associated His Mother with His work. For this reason, We invoke her under the title of Co-Redemptrix. She gave us the Savior, she accompanied Him in the work of Redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with Him the sorrows of the agony and of the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind.” [748]

For all these reasons and more, Our Lady’s Kingdom is as vast at

that of her Son's. "She shares in His kingdom," says St. Albert the Great, "because she shared in His suffering for the human race."

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. echoes the same truth: "Mary was associated with Christ's victory over Satan, sin and death by her union with Him in His humiliations and sufferings. She is, therefore, really associated with Him in His Kingship." [\[749\]](#)

Pope Pius XII declared: "It is certain that only Jesus Christ, God and Man, is King, but Mary as Mother of the King and associated to Him in the work of divine redemption participates in His royal dignity." [\[750\]](#)

The Immaculate Heart, Pattern of the Sacred Heart

It is in Our Lady's Immaculate Heart that Divine Love "gathers all the perfections of His divinity...and brings them together in the heart of the august Queen of all angels. It is fitting that, having chosen Mary to be His Mother and having become her Son, Our Lord should establish such a perfect resemblance between Mother and Son." [\[751\]](#)

As St. John Eudes taught, "In His infinite goodness, He also gave her to us to be our Queen, our Mother and our sure Refuge in all our needs. He therefore wishes us to honor her as He honors her and to love her as He loves her." [\[752\]](#)

Finally, there is another sublime consideration of Our Lady's Queenship: It was from the Immaculate Heart that the Sacred Heart drew its own Likeness. As St. John Eudes stated, "His divine love most perfectly draws its own image in His Mother's amiable heart." [\[753\]](#) What a beautiful truth upon which to contemplate—that **Christ traced His very Heart** after the Mother He created.

Since Jesus is King of All Hearts, it follows that Mary is Queen of All Hearts because They are united in all things. And since the Kingdom of Jesus Christ also belongs to Our Lady, it is the one and only Immaculate Heart who still says to us today, "Whatsoever He shall tell you, do ye." [\[754\]](#)

THE MYSTERY OF THE SACRED HEART DEVOTION

“Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls.”

–*Matt. 11:29*

In the month of June, in which the Virgin showed the three children her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart, the Church honors the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Who wishes us to return His love with our own. The most Holy Heart of Our Lord is so intimately connected with our last end, that He gives us many means “to make reparation to His Heart for the neglect of His love, to pay honour to His Heart, to place our trust in His Heart, to grow in our love for Our Father in heaven, to work to establish and extend the reign of His Heart, and to afford Him the occasion of pouring forth upon men the treasures of His Heart.” [755] In all these things, the Lord once more demonstrates to us the mysteries of His Will—for God Himself usually chooses to act through mankind.

From whence comes the idea of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? “It is popularly believed that Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus originated with the revelations which Our Blessed Lord granted to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and that St. Claude de la Colombière, St. Margaret Mary's spiritual director, was the first to preach that devotion to the people. But this is not true. What is true, however, is that the enormous importance of the mission which St. Margaret Mary received from Our Lord Himself and the great zeal with which Father de la Colombière and many other priests of the Society of Jesus labored to fulfill the express desires of the Sacred Heart for spreading of this devotion to the universal Church have unduly obscured the role of St. John Eudes as the Father, Doctor and Apostle of this beautiful devotion.” [756]

As St. Gregory the Great had said, “Just as the dove finds nourishment in hollow places, so the simple soul seeks in the wounds of Christ the food that makes it strong.” [757] Church history shows that saints like Bonaventure, Bernard, Francis of Assisi, Mechtilde (sometimes called Matilda), the Venerable Abbot Louis of Bloys, and Gertrude (of whom the latter strongly promoted religious piety to the Sacred Heart) held a special adoration and love toward Our Lord in His Passion. Their constancy was displayed with interior and exterior acts in veneration of His Five Holy Wounds or His

Sacred Body pierced with a lance. In fact, “the faithful followers of Christ realized from very early times that the piercing of the sacred side of Jesus on the Cross by the lance of Longinus bore a deep and mysterious meaning, far beyond the mere physical act of a public executioner to assure himself that his victim is dead.” [758]

“For a long time, however, the mystic significance of this event was associated only with the origin of the Church of Christ. Just as Eve, the spouse of Adam, had come forth from the side of her husband when God had cast a deep sleep upon him, so the Church, the Spouse of Christ, issued from His sacred wounded side when He had slept in death; for, from the sacred side of Jesus wounded by the lance there gushed forth blood and water, symbols of the origin of the Church of Christ and the fulness of redemption and grace which flowed from His Passion and death upon the souls of men ransomed by His Precious Blood and washed in the waters of Baptism. Thus too, the wounding of the heart referred to in the Song of Solomon—‘*vulnerasti cor meum*’ (Canticles 4:9)—was thought of in this context as the love of Jesus Christ for His Holy Spouse, the Church.” [759]

In the life and mission of St. John Eudes, who studied upon the piety, practices, and doctrines expounded by previous saints, we once again see “the general law of preparation,” in which God unveils His plan of redemption according to mankind’s response. The truth is that, in a remarkable manner, St. John Eudes drew from Divine Revelation the sprouting seeds of this devotion, carefully tending to them so that, at the proper time willed by God, the flower of the Sacred Heart devotion bloomed.

This saint, who from his earliest years held an ardent devotion to what he called “the Admirable Heart of Mary,” was led by the same Immaculate Heart to a closer love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Savior. This explains why in his writings the saint never separated the two Hearts, and in this he was right. The holy Mother of God always leads souls to her Divine Son. In the words of Cardinal Pie, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is “the very quintessence of Christianity and the substantial summary and compendium of all religion.” [760]

Object and Acts of the Sacred Heart Devotion

“To designate this threefold *object* of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, St. John Eudes distinguished three Hearts in Jesus, namely, *His divine Heart* (indicating His uncreated love), *His spiritual Heart* (indicating the love of

His soul, His human will and higher faculties), and His *corporeal Heart* (indicating the echo of love in the bodily organ which is its symbol and the seat of its emotional warmth). These expressions are no longer in use but they convey a doctrine which has not been altered with the ages. St. John Eudes hastens to add that these three Hearts are but one absolutely single Heart, filled with infinite love for the Holy Trinity and inconceivable charity for mankind; for, he says, the divine Heart of Jesus is the soul, the life and the heart of both His spiritual Heart and His corporeal Heart.” [\[761\]](#)

St. John Eudes summed up four general headings of *acts* which constitute this devotion, as follows:

- 1) To adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
- 2) To praise, bless, glorify and thank Him for His love.
- 3) To ask pardon for our offenses against His great love and to make reparation for them.
- 4) To love Him in return for all His love and beg Him to establish within our hearts the reign of His holy love.

“When all this labor of love had been accomplished and the ground so well prepared for worldwide acceptance of this highly important devotion, Our Blessed Lord appeared to the holy Visitation nun, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, and confided to her the desires of His most Sacred Heart. Jesus Christ Himself picked this saintly religious to be the divinely appointed instrument for the diffusion of devotion to His Sacred Heart throughout the length and breadth of Christendom...” [\[762\]](#)

**“Behold this Heart,
which has so loved men”**

In a series of late 17th century apparitions, Our Lord spoke to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. In the fourth apparition (also referred to as the “Great Apparition”), He showed to her His Heart, opening with these beautiful words, “Behold this Heart, which has so loved men.” For her own part, St. Margaret Mary wrote, “This Heart was shown me as on a throne of flames, more dazzling than the sun and transparent as crystal, with that adorable wound, and surrounded with a crown of thorns which signified the pricks caused by our sins. And above there was a cross, which signified that from the first moment of His Incarnation—that is to say as soon as this Heart was formed—the Cross was planted in It, and which His sacred humanity would have to suffer during His whole lifetime and His sacred Passion.”

[\[763\]](#)

In very human terms, the Sacred Heart of Jesus described to the saint His love for mankind, speaking of a love that makes His Heart glow, a Heart that feels grateful for love returned, a Heart that is “sensitive, suffering, compassionate” and a Heart which expresses other human sentiments, like joy, contentment, affliction, and grief. [764]

As a result, many view that the “Heart of Jesus, then, is to be considered under two aspects: both as glowing with love for men and cruelly offended by their ingratitude.” [765]

Yet there is much more to this devotion, because it is not only for us that Christ died. The Heart of Our Savior teaches us how to love God the Father and God the Holy Ghost. He teaches us how to love the woman whom He chose to be His Virgin Mother. Finally, He teaches us how to love mankind and even ourselves. So often we hear that mankind is evil and that we were not worth Christ’s sacrifice. That is true—we are undeserving. Of ourselves, we are nothing. Still, we are not totally worthless, because we were purchased at a great price. [766] We have no right to squander such a ransom.

Never should we forget our great worth is due only to God Himself, Who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting.” [767] Jesus is the Word made flesh. We should not forget that the Son’s great love—for His Father and for mankind—caused Him to willingly choose to incarnate as God-made-Man and die in reparation for our sins.

No mere man could ever do what Jesus did, for only God could offer to God such a worthy recompense for the multitude of offenses made throughout all time, by all mankind, against the Lord our God. Jesus Christ—the Second Person of the Holy Trinity—chose to live a life of holy poverty and die a most cruel death for our offenses. By doing so, He offers all of us another chance at eternal life. God the Father lovingly allowed this; and so, He sent His Son into the world, He accepted His Son’s sacrifice and glorified Him. As for us, we can never be grateful enough to the Divine Trinity. We, too, should want to glorify Him.

“Consequently, what we wish to honour in the devotion to the Heart of Jesus is not only His physical Heart but also His spiritual Heart. In other words, His physical Heart, the symbol of His love and of His whole inner life, does not make up the entire object of the devotion; this object also comprises His spiritual Heart, the principle and seat of His love and of His whole inner life.” [768] However, as “the Person of Jesus is the general and

ultimate object of the devotion, we may also say: it is devotion to Jesus, considered in His Heart, the symbol, principle, and seat of His love; or [in other words] it is devotion to Jesus, viewed in His love, produced and symbolized by His Heart.” [769] This view is in accord with St. Thomas Aquinas’ principle, which he stated as follows: “Honour is, properly speaking, rendered to the entire person. Even when we honour the foot or the hand of a person, we do not venerate these parts in themselves, but only by reason of the entire person to whom they belong.” [770]

Constancy to the Sacred Heart, Needed More than Ever

“The most striking characteristic of the teaching of St. John Eudes on devotion to the Sacred Heart—as indeed of his whole teaching on the spiritual life—is that Christ is always its centre. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ —*per Ipsum, cum Ipso et in Ipso*—all devotion and all piety achieves its end.” [771]

Pope Pius XI, in his 1928 encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor* (On Reparation to the Sacred Heart), explained and reinforced the need for this devotion, but consider how much more, in these days, his insight applies: “Now, how great is the necessity of this expiation or reparation, more especially in this our age, will be manifest to everyone who, as we said at the outset, will examine the world, ‘*seated in wickedness*’ (1 Jn. 5:19), with his eyes and with his mind. For from all sides the cry of the peoples who are mourning comes up to us, and their princes or rulers have indeed stood up and met together as one against the Lord and against His Church (Cf. Psalm 2: 2). Throughout those regions indeed, we see that all rights both human and Divine are confounded. Churches are thrown down and overturned, religious men and sacred virgins are torn from their homes and are afflicted with abuse, with barbarities, with hunger and imprisonment; bands of boys and girls are snatched from the bosom of their mother the Church, and are induced to renounce Christ, to blaspheme and to attempt the worst crimes of lust; the whole Christian people, sadly disheartened and disrupted, are continually in danger of falling away from the faith, or of suffering the most cruel death. These things in truth are so sad that you might say that such events foreshadow and portend the ‘*beginning of sorrows*,’ that is to say of those that shall be brought by **the man of sin**, ‘*who is lifted up above all that is called God or is worshipped*’ (2 Thess. 2: 4).” [772]

The Pope’s words regarding all that the Church and mankind were

already suffering by 1928 bear an uncanny resemblance to that which in 1917 the Virgin of Fatima foretold if her requests were not heeded: “[Russia] will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated.” [\[773\]](#)

At Fatima, in June—the month of the Sacred Heart—the Virgin succinctly stated, “My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and *the path that leads you to God.*” [\[774\]](#) Once more, the Virgin Mother “stepped in” as Mediatrix between humanity and her Divine Son.

“If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make our abode with him.” [\[775\]](#) The two Hearts are inseparable. While the central theme of Fatima is devotion to the Immaculate Heart, the Virgin interceded, commanding as our Mother that people must cease offending God and also offer reparation to her Immaculate Heart. Not enough had harkened to the previous loving complaints of Our Lord, Who had kept in reserve for the people of the latter days devotion to His Sacred Heart. And though so many still do not listen, the words of Christ our Saviour will always apply: “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” [\[776\]](#)

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS AND THE GREAT SECRET OF FATIMA

“God’s goodness is at once the most public of all His attributes and, at the same time, the most secret.”

–*Fr. Frederick Faber*

“Devotion to the Precious Blood is as old as the world, and the devotion to this redemptive and Eucharistic Blood of Jesus is as old as the Church,” wrote the Catholic priest, Fr. M. Waltz, in his early 20th century work on the Precious Blood. [777] At Fatima in 1917, Our Lady chose the month of July to give the Great Secret, in its three distinct parts, in the same month in which the Church commemorates the Precious Blood of Jesus. Is there a connection between each of the three parts of the Great Secret and July, the month of the Precious Blood?

The First Secret, which provides the means to save poor sinners of this era from hell, offers a spiritual remedy—i.e., worldwide devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Second Secret tells the Pope and the rest of the Church *how to administer the remedy*. It includes two specific requests, conditional prophecies, and gives an infallible promise of robust spiritual health and vitality for the Church and the world when the remedy is given. The Third Secret, insofar as only the Vision is known but not Our Lady’s words explaining it, describes what seems to be a particular historic era that will culminate in the Church’s Way of the Cross. Where in all this is the Precious Blood of Jesus?

First, let us look again at the initial supernatural manifestations at Fatima, which began with the appearance of an angel. Three times through the spring and late summer of 1916, the angel appeared to three shepherd children, Lucia dos Santos (now Servant of God) and her two younger cousins, Blessed Francisco Marto and Blessed Jacinta Marto. On his first visit, he identified himself as the Angel of Peace, commanded the children to pray with him, and taught them a brief prayer.

On his second visit, the angel appeared suddenly, during the children’s afternoon rest on an unbearably hot summer day, admonishing them, **“What are you doing? Pray! Pray very much! The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High!”** [778] Telling them that they could make everything they do as a sacrifice offered to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He

is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners, the angel also revealed himself as the Angel Guardian of Portugal. As we have seen in Part I, he did not give his name but we can say with moral certainty that he was the great St. Michael the archangel, the Prince of the heavenly host who for 1,000 years has been invoked as Portugal's guardian. The wondrous St. Michael concluded his visit by saying **"Above all, accept and bear with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you."** [\[779\]](#)

Years later, Sr. Lucia wrote in her memoirs that on his third and last visit (which took place about a year before the Great Miracle of the Sun), the angel appeared "holding a chalice in his hands, with a host above it, from which some drops of blood were falling into the sacred vessel. Leaving the chalice and the host suspended in the air, the Angel prostrated on the ground and repeated this prayer three times:

'O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He Himself is offended. And by the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and those of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of all poor sinners.'

"Then, rising, he once more took the chalice and the host in his hands. He gave the host to me, and to Jacinta and Francisco he gave the contents of the chalice to drink, saying as he did so: **"Take and eat the Body and drink the Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God."** [\[780\]](#)

Our Lady and the Precious Blood

From the beginning of the Fatima apparitions, focus began with the Holy Trinity, the True Presence of Jesus under the mere appearance of bread and wine, and reparatory prayer and sacrifice. The children were being prepared for lives of increasing atonement for sins, first with sacrifices made of their own accord and later with those which God sent them. This latter type of sacrifice is the kind from which so many people shy away, forgetting that "there is an apostolate of suffering, as well as an apostolate of prayer and labor," [\[781\]](#) as St. Paul reminds Christians: *For whom He foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.* [\[782\]](#)

The Holy Trinity prayer (offered three times in succession) is one that we, too, are meant to pray. It is the perfect prayer to offer when in the

Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, before or after receiving absolution, when the Host is elevated as Mass, or when at Benediction, before or after our Rosary prayers, and most certainly in thanksgiving after receiving Holy Communion.

The True Presence of Our Lord is the same Jesus Who, in the hypostatic union of true God and true Man, assumed from His Immaculate Mother His own Flesh and Blood. “It is an article of faith that the Blessed Virgin gave to the Son of God that most pure and Precious Blood which the Holy Ghost drew from her virginal veins as from the original source of man’s redemption. This body of the Mother of God, in order of nature, was purer than the rays of the sun and, in the order of grace, purer than the blessed Spirits” (the angels). [\[783\]](#)

The 19th century priest, Fr. Frederick Faber explained, “The Precious Blood was *assumed* directly to Our Blessed Lord’s Divine Person from His Immaculate Mother. It was not taken merely to His Body, so that His body was directly assumed to the Person of the Word, and His Blood only indirectly or mediately as part of His Body. The Blood, which was the predetermined price of our redemption, rested directly and immediately on the Divine Person, and thus entered into the very highest and most unspeakable degree of the Hypostatic Union—if we may speak of degrees in such an adorably simple mystery. It was not merely a concomitant of the Flesh, an inseparable accident of the Body. The Blood itself as Blood, was assumed directly by the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.” [\[784\]](#)

“It came also from Mary’s blood. Mary’s blood was the material out of which the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the artificer of the Sacred Humanity, fashioned the Blood of Jesus. Moreover,” Fr. Faber continued, “there is some portion of the Precious Blood which once was Mary’s blood, and which remains still in Our Blessed Lord...At this moment in heaven, He retains something which once was his Mother’s...” [\[785\]](#)

Already we receive glimpses of understanding why souls may attain salvation via devotion to the Immaculate Heart, because “the Precious Blood is the fountain of the plenitude of all graces in Mary, but it is also the source of her power to help us.” [\[786\]](#)

The Great Secret Revisited

As this book has already mentioned, the First Secret opened with Our Lady momentarily showing the children a terrifying apparition of hell. Then

the Virgin said “so kindly and so sadly: You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world to My Immaculate Heart.”

“If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the reign of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.” [\[787\]](#)

Then begins the Second Secret, as Our Lady continued, “To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace. If not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.” [\[788\]](#)

A Vision of the Church’s Calvary

Like the First and Second Secrets, the Third Secret of Fatima is literal, not symbolic, and it also has two parts. As we have already seen, the Third Secret begins with the words written in Lucia’s *Fourth Memoir*, “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, etc.” At some point, the children saw another Vision (described below by Lucia), but the Church Militant and the world still await the publication of the Virgin’s words that describe this mystifying Vision. Let us again look at Lucia’s description of it, which indicates a modern-day Calvary for the Church.

“After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’. And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father’. Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which

there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.”

Truly, the Third Secret Vision is a sobering one. It brings to mind what was said by Our Lord, appearing to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque with His Sacred Heart torn and His Body so grievously wounded: “Behold the state to which I am reduced by My chosen people that should have appeased My justice, and that instead persecute Me. If they amend not, I will chastise them severely. I will withdraw the just and the innocent, and immolate the rest in My just anger, inflamed against them by their sins.” Christ’s warning came to pass in the French Revolution and the 19th century’s subsequent revolutions.

As St. Jean-Marie Vianney once said, “The good God asks not for the martyrdom of our body, but asks for the martyrdom of our hearts and wills.” [789] Fr. Faber noted, “Each age is a stray sheep from God; and the Church has to seek it and fetch it back to Him...Each age needs persuading in a manner of its own,” but as he also observed, “Works of mercy are not attractive to hearts untouched by love.” [790]

Then, only a few years before the Fatima apparitions, Fr. Waltz of esteemed memory also remarked, “In our age of luxury and religious indifference, men do not want to be reminded of moral regeneration, of the necessity of struggling against the flesh, the world, and the devil; they do not want to hear of their obligation to use the means of salvation and thus co-operate with God’s grace.” [791] Finally, St. Paul infallibly stated, “And almost all things, according to the law, are cleansed with blood: and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” [792]

The Third Secret is a serious warning for the Church because the Church is the work of the Precious Blood. As Fr. Faber said, “The salvation of individual souls is dependent on the Church. Hence the building up of the Church is one of the grandest works of the Precious Blood. The conversion of

nations, the history of doctrine, the holding of councils, the spread of the episcopate, the influence of the ecclesiastical upon the civil law, the freedom of the Holy See, the papal monarchy of ages past, the concordats of the present day, the filial subordination of Catholic governments—all these things alter the face of the spiritual world.” [\[793\]](#)

For this particular era of history, the Mother of Mercy again intercedes with her Divine Son. She acts on our behalf to satisfy Divine Justice, save souls from hell, and convert millions to the Faith, so that God will grant the entire world an era of peace. Hidden in all of the Fatima Virgin’s requests is the Precious Blood, the secret behind the Great Secret because, as Fr. Faber once wrote, “God’s goodness is at once the most public of all His attributes and, at the same time, **the most secret.**” The Virgin, fountain of the Precious Blood, is the rightful dispenser of the Precious Blood, the source of all the graces which the Savior channels through the hands of His Virgin Mother. And so it follows that whether for a nation or an individual, it always remains true that “belonging to Mary is a privileged means of belonging to Christ.” [\[794\]](#)

THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS: THE SIGN THAT SHALL BE CONTRADICTED

“And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother: Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.”

–*Luke 2:34-35*

At Fatima, Our Lady promised that her Immaculate Heart shall be our refuge, and that path that leads us to God. Shortly before she appeared at Fatima, the Angel of Peace gave the children Holy Communion, saying to them: “Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.”

Two thousand years before, St. Simeon’s prophesied “sign of contradiction” was the cross upon which Christ was crucified, sanctifying the very instrument of His torture and death, while piercing the soul of the Immaculate Virgin, so that the thoughts of many would be revealed. It is no coincidence, then, that Our Lady’s appearance at Fatima on September 13, when the cloud thrice formed into a pillar that rose like incense, occurred on the eve of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

“ ‘*Through Thee the precious Cross is honored and worshiped throughout the world.*’ Thus did Saint Cyril of Alexandria praise Our Lady on the morrow of that great day, which saw her Divine Maternity vindicated at Ephesus. Eternal Wisdom has willed that the Octave of Mary’s Birth should be honored by the celebration of this Feast of the triumph of the Holy Cross. The Cross indeed is the standard of God’s armies, whereof Mary is the Queen; it is by the Cross that she crushes the serpent’s head, and wins so many victories over error, and over the enemies of the Christian name.”

[\[795\]](#) St. Cyril was speaking of a day honored since the second century and which should not be forgotten in ours: *The Exaltation of the Holy Cross* on September 14.

There exists a prevailing Catholic tradition that the aged St. Helene, mother of Emperor Constantine, experienced a dream about the Cross of Christ. As a result, the saint felt she was told it was her mission to find it. She then commenced a royal pilgrimage to Jerusalem and, along the way, the truly pious and charitable saint literally assisted many in need. Upon reaching Jerusalem, she was told by Bishop Macarius that all of the holy sites of Jesus

had been covered by pagan Roman shrines almost 200 yrs. previously—i.e., the cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem sported an idol of Adonis; the spot on Calvary where Our Lord was crucified had a large marble bust of the idol goddess, Venus, and over the Holy Sepulcher was the idol Jupiter, the king of all the false Roman gods.

In the name of her son, the Emperor, St. Helene ordered the removal of these idols and had the sites prepared for the building of Catholic churches. The excavations led to the discovery of the True Cross on September 14, 326 A.D. The precious Relic was buried in a pit (also called a cistern), near Golgotha (the Place of the Skull), along with two other crosses and scattered crucifixion nails. With the crosses (but not attached to any of them) was also found the writing ordered by Pontius Pilate to be placed on Jesus' Cross. To discern which one of the three was Christ's Cross, the Bishop of Jerusalem "proposed a sure means of confirming which was the True One. They were taken to the bedside of a distinguished lady who was dangerously ill. As the bishop prayed for a revelation, the touch of the True Cross immediately cured her." [\[796\]](#)

The saint entrusted a portion of the True Cross to Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem, who every year thereafter exposed It for the veneration of the people. The second part of the Cross was sent to her son Constantine, who was in Constantinople, where it also was adored by the people. A third part was sent to Rome. Legend also says that at St. Helene's initiative, Constantine had built a most beautiful Church on the very spot in which the Cross was buried. In that particular edifice was placed the Relic entrusted to Bishop Macarius. This church is known as the Basilica of Calvary. Another building which St. Helene ensured was constructed is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. The solemn dedication of Constantine's basilica, which enclosed both Calvary and the Holy Sepulcher, took place on September 14, 335 A.D. [\[797\]](#)

Nearly three centuries later, Chosroes, King of Persia, captured the Holy Relic in 614 A.D. However, it was rescued by Heraclius, King of Judea, in 629 A.D. on the anniversary date of the Relic's discovery and the later consecrations of the two Churches—September 14. According to an adaption of Fr. Gueranger's *The Liturgical Year*, it is stated, "and on his return to Jerusalem, Heraclius, with great pomp, bore It back on his own shoulders to the Mount whither Our Savior had carried It."

"This event was signalized by a remarkable miracle. Heraclius, attired as

he was in robes adorned with gold and precious stones, was forced to stand still at the gate which led to Mount Calvary. The more he endeavored to advance, the more he seemed fixed to the spot. Heraclius himself and all the people were astounded; but Zacharias, the Bishop of Jerusalem, said: ‘Consider, O Emperor, how little thou imitatest the poverty and humility of Jesus Christ, by carrying the Cross clad in triumphal robes.’ Heraclius thereupon laid aside his magnificent apparel, and barefoot, clothed in poor attire, he easily completed the rest of the way, and replaced the Cross in the same place on Mount Calvary, whence It had been carried off by the Persians. From this event, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which was celebrated yearly on this day, gained fresh luster, in memory of the Cross being replaced by Heraclius on the spot where it had first been set up for Our Savior.” [798]

On a related note, Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist on “the eve of Passover, the 13th day of the moon of the month of Abib or Nisan, after the spring equinox, corresponding to our 6th of April; in the year A.D. 34.” [799] This means that the Messiah was crucified on the 14th day of the moon, according to the Jewish calendar, yet His Holy Cross was found on the 14th day of the month, according to the Julian calendar.

Glorifying the Cross of Christ

Why, then, is September 14 called on the Church’s liturgical calendar the *Exaltation* of the Holy Cross? “To exalt the Holy Cross is to glorify it. The word *ex-altare* in Latin means to elevate, to raise to a high place, which is to glorify...It is to proclaim the glory of God in face of the attempt of His enemies to humiliate Him. Our attitude should smash the enemy's attempts to humiliate Our Lord.” [800]

The Cross of Christ is and remains the “sign which shall be contradicted” foretold by the aged Simeon, who spoke to the Virgin Mary under the Holy Ghost’s inspiration. The cross was the instrument of the most brutal condemnation to death, reserved for the vilest of criminals among the slaves and conquered peoples of Rome. Crucifixion was considered so horrific that Roman law forbade such a death sentence to Roman citizens. However, the Son of God, the Word made flesh, allowed mere men to put Him to death in this way, to make an infinite act of reparation to God the Father, and to redeem us from our sins.

The manner of the Lord’s death was foretold by the Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah, but it was again foretold soon after His Holy

Nativity. When the Savior of mankind was only eight days old, He was brought to the Temple by the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, there to be ransomed from the Lord. The *Gospel of St Luke* records what happened:

“And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was in him.

And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the temple.”

“And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he also took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said: Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; Because my eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

“And his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother: Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and *for a sign which shall be contradicted*; And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.” [\[801\]](#)

The Holy Bible (*Douay-Rheims* translation) includes a footnote explaining the words “for the fall” as follows: “Christ came for the salvation of all men; but here Simeon prophesies what would come to pass, that many through their own wilful (sic) blindness and obstinacy would not believe in Christ, nor receive his doctrine, which therefore would be ruin to them: but to others a resurrection, by their believing in Him, and obeying his commandments.”

As St. Andrew of Crete explained in a discourse on the Feast of the Holy Cross: “Had there been no cross, Christ could not have been crucified. Had there been no cross, Life itself could not have been nailed to the tree. And if Life had not been nailed to it, there would be no streams of immortality pouring from Christ’s side, blood and water for the world’s cleansing. The legal bond of our sin would not be cancelled, we should not have attained our freedom, we should not have enjoyed the fruit of the tree of life and the gates of paradise would not stand open. Had there been no cross, death would not have been trodden underfoot, nor hell despoiled.”

“Therefore, the Cross is something wonderfully great and honorable. It is

great because through the Cross the many noble acts of Christ found their consummation—very many indeed, for both His miracles and His sufferings were fully rewarded with victory. The Cross is honourable because it is both the sign of God’s suffering and the trophy of his victory. It stands for His suffering because on it He freely suffered unto death. But it is also His trophy because it was the means by which the devil was wounded and death conquered; the barred gates of hell were smashed, and the Cross became the one common salvation of the whole world.”

“The Cross is called Christ’s glory; it is saluted as His triumph. We recognize it as the cup He longed to drink and the climax of the sufferings He endured for our sake. As to the Cross being Christ’s glory, listen to His words: *‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and in him God is glorified, and God will glorify him at once.’* And again: *‘Father, glorify me with the glory I had with you before the world came to be.’* And once more: *‘Father, glorify Thy name.’* Then a voice came from heaven: *‘I have glorified it and will glorify it again.’* Here He speaks of the glory that would accrue to Him through the Cross. And if you would understand that the Cross is Christ’s triumph, hear what He himself also said: *“When I am lifted up, then I will draw all men to myself.”* Now you can see that the Cross is Christ’s glory and triumph.” [\[802\]](#)

From His holy Infancy to the choosing and teaching of His Apostles, the whole of Our Lord’s earthly life was in anticipation of the Cross and the birth of His Church, His own kingdom on earth. “Why did the Lord spend His public life wandering from place to place? He wanted to train his Apostles like soldiers, accustom them to hardships, drill them by a severe novitiate, harden their muscles, strengthen their wills, that they might be prepared later to travel through the nations while preaching His *Gospel*, and to enable them to stand all kinds of trials and hardships, even martyrdom destined for them all, except St. John.” [\[803\]](#) Such is the lot of Christ’s true Apostles and true disciples.

To perpetually remind us of the True Cross, which the world considers “*a sign which shall be contradicted*,” **St. John Chrysostom** said: “Do not ever go out of your house without making the Sign of the Cross. It will be for you a shield, a weapon, an inexpugnable tower. Neither man nor demon will ever dare to attack you, if they see you clothed with this armor.” **Origen** declared: “The Sign of the Cross is the invisible armor of Christians. Soldier of Christ that you are, wear this Armor always during the day, and during the

night, and everywhere. Without It, do not undertake any task, whether it be sleeping or traveling, resting or working, eating or drinking, be always clothed with this Protective Armor. Adorn and protect every single one of your members with this Victorious Sign. At the sight of this Sign the infernal powers flee scared and stupefied.” As **St. Augustine** taught the catechumens: “We must confront the enemy with the Symbol and Sign of the Cross; so that the Christian vested with these weapons may easily triumph over the ancient and prideful tyrant.” **St. Athanasius** said: “By means of the Sign of the Cross the works of magic are made impotent; all the enchantments lose their efficacy. By means of It, the impetus of the most brutal will is moderated and pacified.” [\[804\]](#)

Finally, may we always remember: “We make the Sign of the Cross to express two important mysteries of the Christian religion, the Blessed Trinity and the Redemption...By means of the Sign of the Cross, we obtain *God’s blessing* and protection from dangers both spiritual and physical...Since it is a sign of God and His crucified Son, the devil fears it, and it is a shield against temptation. The saints used to make the Sign of the Cross when evil thoughts assailed them; many Catholics today follow their example, and we should do the same. In doing so, we put a seal on our foreheads that proclaims: **‘I belong to Christ, the King of all.’**” [\[805\]](#)

We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world. [\[806\]](#)

THE GREATEST SECRET: OUR IMITATION OF CHRIST

“Love God, serve God; everything is in that.”

–*St. Clare of Assisi*

At Fatima, the Angel of Peace taught the children this prayer: **“O my God, I believe, I adore, I trust and I love Thee! I ask pardon of Thee for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not trust and do not love Thee.”** As members of the Catholic City, how often do we consider the great privileges granted us by Christ our King? At the very moment we became citizens of His Kingdom by baptism, we also became His adopted children. As His children, we received the right and the duty to enter the Christian school of perfection, in which we learn how to pray, study, and act. If we are loving children, we become willing students who learn how to “school our own character to a consistent and persevering practice” [807] after that of our King’s, who gave Himself to be our Divine Teacher and Model. Our imitation of Christ in His Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection is the greatest secret of the Catholic City.

The Saints and Their Love of Christ Crucified

“Look at the life of any Saint you like, and you will find an extraordinary devotion to the Passion. It was the distinguishing mark of the Saints; they would not have been Saints without it.” [808] This statement is affirmed by the saints themselves, from whom the following quotes offer only a small collection of their testimony:

- St. Alphonsus di Liguori noted that all the Saints cherished a tender devotion towards Jesus Christ in His Passion, emphasizing that it was the only means by which they sanctified themselves. [809]
- St. Augustine proclaimed, “There is nothing more advantageous, nothing better adapted to ensure our eternal salvation, than daily to contemplate the sufferings which Jesus Christ bore for our sake.” [810]
- St. Paul wrote, “I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified” [811] meaning he meditated on “the love that Our Lord has shown us on the Cross.” [812]
- “He who desires to advance from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, should meditate continually on the Passion of Jesus,” said St. Bonaventure.

[813]

- At another time, St. Bonaventure showed the Angelic Doctor an image of the Crucified Lord, explaining, “This is my book, whence I receive everything I write, and it has taught me whatever little I know.” [814]

- “I found more wisdom in prayer at the feet of the Crucified than in all the books I ever read,” wrote St. Thomas as he penned his famous meditation, “The Crucifix: The Book of Life.” [815]

- St. Francis of Assisi simply stated, “My book is Jesus Crucified,” and often encouraged his brethren to think of the Passion of Jesus. [816]

- St. Terese of Avila said that souls in every state of prayer should think of the Passion. “Life is long and full of crosses and we have need to look on Christ, our pattern, to see how He bore His trials, and even to take example by His Apostles and saints if we would bear our own trials perfectly. Our good Jesus and His most Blessed Mother are too good company to be left [alone]...” [817]

Why the Passion of Christ?

Why did Our Lord choose to suffer so intensely in soul and body? After all, God was under no obligation to assume our nature and to save us. For three principle reasons, the Son of God became Man of His own free will: **1)** to make full reparation to the love and justice of His Father, so deeply offended by mankind’s sinfulness and ingratitude; **2)** to redeem us from all iniquity, and **3)** to show mankind the terrible consequences of sin. It is for these three reasons that the earthly life of Christ, from its humble beginnings to its cruel closing, presented Him with a continual martyrdom. His Divine Heart was ever “mourning within Him, its sorrow above all human sorrow.” [818]

The saints explain that *suffering gives a certain intensity to acts of the will, which nothing else can give*. An act of the will or of the heart may be strong—but how much stronger it must be in the face of suffering. Human nature shrinks from suffering and dreads it, but not one of the sons of men was ever so sensitive as Our Lord, Jesus Christ, or endured sufferings in any way comparable to His. Our Lord chose the greatest intensity of suffering to prove the reality and depth of His love for us—a love of which we are capable of returning as we learn to subdue **Self**.

All of us experience moments of spiritual solace, in which we feel the sweetness and joy of belonging to Him. Without realizing it, these consolations become “the only delight we crave.” [819] God then begins to

wean us from them, for we must learn to love the God of consolations rather than the consolations of God.

“*We would like to serve the Lord, but in our own way, and not as He desires,*” [820] as St. Alphonsus notes. To overcome the inclinations of Self, we must pray, study and act on the Passion of Christ. As God weans us with great or small trials, to whatever degree, we soon discover that Self is still strong, with all its subtlety, self-centeredness and weakness—“**Self**, which stands importunate beside us, protesting, crying, wailing, resisting.” [821]

Then one of two things happens: either we give into that hurt and smarting Self, which complains, grows bitter, and resists fidelity to God **or** we turn to God in our interior and exterior sufferings. Should we succumb to Self, we deeply hurt Jesus, for as St. Therese the Little Flower said, “What offends Jesus, what wounds Him to the Heart, is want of confidence.” [822]

When we take the right course by choosing to turn to God, we “seize the pain or trouble or bitterness, and offer it, turning it into fuel to feed the flame of our hearts, and so we intensify the act of our union and love...” [823] It is when we are suffering that Christ is very near to us. “We always find that those who walked closest to Christ were those who had to bear the greatest trials,” avowed St. Teresa of Avila.

With our free will, we make the choice whether or not we shall follow in Christ’s footsteps with *His* grace or with *our own* grumbling bitterness. Whether we like it or not, carry the Cross we must. **Like the two thieves crucified with Christ**, what makes the difference between our salvation or our perdition is our disposition and inclination to accept grace.

The contrast between the two thieves explains why St. Ignatius advises us, when we even glance at a Crucifix, to ask for a true compassion of the will. This true compassion is **not** only of heart, eyes, feelings or tears, which can mislead us – but consists of a higher, *effective* compassion in which the will is determinedly resigned to whatever God wills or allows. Such a resolve was St. Paul’s intention when he wrote, “I...fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church.” [824] As the *Douay-Rheims* footnote explains: “There is no want in the sufferings of Christ in Himself as Head: but many sufferings are still wanting, or are still to come, in His Body the Church, and his members the faithful.”

“**The perfection of religion is to imitate whom you adore.**” [825] That is why, in bearing the pain of our own crosses, our wills can turn to Jesus

Crucified and offer Him all that we are enduring. St. Alphonsus wrote, “The best prayer you can say is to resign yourself to the will of God in the midst of your sufferings, uniting your pains to the pains of Jesus Christ and offering them as a sacrifice to God.” [826] If we can make that offering, which is truly an act of the will and not of “feelings,” in the face of all kinds of suffering—grief, abandonment, humiliation, mockery, unjust treatment, illness or infirmity—then never is our love for God so true and meritorious.

Charity: The Height of Virtue, the Perfection of Sanctity

In faithfully making the [Morning Offering](#), we also make our first meditation on the Passion because we immediately offer to God, in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. To this offering, we then unite our every thought, word, and action of the day.

No matter our state in life, meditation on the Passion of Our Lord is good for all persons. The Passion has power to rouse sorrow and penance in sinners, just as “it gives strength and a most powerful example of virtue to those who are making progress, and it is the most forcible incentive to love for the perfect.” [827]

In the school of Christian perfection, the Passion of Our Lord contains all that is highest and most complete in excellence. All of His virtues, all His instructions, all His doctrine, and all His counsels are preached in His Passion. “All the depth of suffering that anyone can undergo, all the extremities of misery to which anyone may be brought—all are in the Passion: all deliverance from illusion and all learning of the truth are in the Passion; all knowledge, understanding, and heavenly wisdom are to be found in the Passion...” [828]

“O my adorable Master,” says Dom Chautaurd in *The Soul of the Apostolate*, “there are three sentiments which hold sway in Your Sacred Heart: complete *dependence* upon Your Father, and therefore *perfect humility*; then secondly, *a burning and universal love for men*; and finally, *the spirit of sacrifice*.” [829]

“All that I can do I will do for them” was Christ’s motto through life. When the hour had come, He did not what benefited Him but what would help us most. Like us in all things except sin, He would meet suffering and death. To be like us in all things, this was His rule from first to last: that **having shown Himself *like us*, He might win us to be *like Him***, ready to

say in the hour of trial, “Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me; but yet not My will, but Thine be done.” [830]

“My soul is sorrowful unto death,” [831] Our Lord so piteously mourned. **And what was the relief?** It was **prayer**, just as He had admonished the Apostles: “Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.” [832]

The secret of Our Lord’s desire to suffer was His Love, but it was not the suffering itself for which Christ longed. No, it was the **result** of that suffering –for that joy that was set before Him–for which He willingly endured the Cross.

Like Him, when we suffer, we suffer for a reason but, unlike Him, we may not know why. Still, like the Angel who comforted Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, He comforts us: “So also you now indeed have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you.” [833]

The Holiest of Schools

“It is an excellent and holy practice to call to mind and meditate on Our Lord’s Passion, since it is by this path that we shall arrive at union with God. In this, the holiest of all schools, true wisdom is learned, for it was there that all the saints became wise,” said St. Paul of the Cross. [834]

How strongly and eloquently the Passion defines charity in all its branches: *“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Abide in my love...You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you.”* [835]

Our Lord Himself said, “Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” [836] True Christians have no excuse in forgetting this magnificent lesson of charity, since the loving Jesus set the path before us. The Passion of Christ is the culmination of sanctity, the highest exercise of virtue, and the greatest cause of merit. It is in His Sacred Passion that He specially desires to be remembered by us. [837]

“He that loveth not,” says St. John, *“knoweth not God, for God is charity.* By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him. In this is charity: not as though we had loved God, but because he hath first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.” [838]

God loved us *first*. Charity, the highest of all virtues by which we love God and then our neighbors for love of God, is what moved Jesus Christ to

be “conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary” and become Man. It is because of Christ’s charity that we can truly say: “I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me.” [839]

I Love You More...

“*The charity of Christ presses us*” meaning Jesus’ sacrificial love naturally inspires reciprocation, not to mention gratitude. It is not enough to say we love God because love is proven by deeds **and** by a pure intention.

“*Forget not the kindness of thy Surety, for He hath given His life for thee,*” [840] teaches the Holy Ghost. St. Alphonsus posed this same truth in the form of a question, one we should ask ourselves, especially when we think of the Passion of Christ: “*And you, Christian soul, what have you done for your Divine Redeemer? What proof of your love have you given Him?*” [841]

Perhaps the best answer to these two questions was given by St. Robert Southwell: “God gave Himself to you; now give yourself to God.” By cooperating with grace, by thinking upon the Passion of Jesus, by striving against our natural inclinations, in subduing Self and in returning Christ’s love, we say to Jesus, “**I love You more...**”—*more* than this consolation, *more* than my self-interest, *more* than my anxiety, *more* than my grief, or *more* than this moment of gratification. To pray, to study and to act upon the Passion of Christ means to cultivate charity within our souls.

In our day and age, we often forget **the true meaning of charity**—that divinely infused virtue by which we prefer God as the sovereign good before all else. It is with charity alone that we can do God’s Will and with charity alone that we are united to Him. Charity is called the “queen of virtues,” because it will rule forever in Heaven— but before we can hope to attain that Heaven, ***Charity must first become queen of our hearts.***

OUR LORD'S ESCORTS ON THE WAY OF THE CROSS

“The crosses with which our path through life is strewn associate us with Jesus in the mystery of His crucifixion.”

–*St. John Eudes*

At Fatima, St. Michael the archangel said, **“Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners... Above all, accept and bear with submission, the suffering which the Lord will send you.”** And who should we look to for the perfect examples of such charity, other than Our Lord and His Virgin Mother?

Three times had Pontius Pilate attempted to save Jesus' life but, in the end, he delivered Our Lord to the will of those demanding His crucifixion. [842] “And in bearing His own Cross, He went to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha.” [843]

Along the Via Dolorosa (the Way of Sorrows), Our Lord was accompanied by a great escort of people from all walks of life, each playing a part in Our Lord's Passion. Distinguished from this company are three divisions: **1)** Those who load the Savior with the Cross, **2)** Those who literally carry the Cross with Him, and **3)** Those who spiritually participate with Jesus in bearing the Cross. [844]

- Within the first group are those who lay the cross upon Our Lord. Foremost among this assembly were those responsible for His unjust trial, the tortures that accompanied it, and the death sentence proclaimed against Him. These men, the leaders of the first ecclesia, heard Jesus' holy doctrine, witnessed many of His miracles and signs, and yet refused to acknowledge Him as the Messiah, the Son of God.

On the first Palm Sunday, Christ entered Jerusalem as the city prepared for the Jewish Passover, and all that happened concerning Jesus filled the chief priests and scribes with fury. They were scandalized by the honor shown to Jesus by the multitude, who strewed both their garments and tree boughs before Him and who praised Him, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.” [845]

After Jesus threw the moneychangers from the temple, the lame and blind went to Him and He healed them. “And the chief priests and scribes,

seeing the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying: Hosanna to the son of David; were moved with indignation.” [846]

The Pharisees and the Sadducees would not leave Christ alone. They demanded explanations from Our Lord. Then they devised various tests for Him, and they asked from whence came His authority. He in turn tested them with His question about the source of John the Baptist’s authority to baptize. To the ongoing exchanges, Jesus added two parables, which further angered them, for they knew He spoke of them. [847] Finally, they tried one last tactic by feigning goodwill toward His mission, while publicly asking Him cunning questions to ensnare Him before all the people, who “were in admiration of His doctrine.” [848]

In their last attempt to trick Him and justify themselves before the people, Jesus severely rebuked them. From that day, as the *Gospel of St. Matthew* records, no man dared ask Him any more questions. [849]

It was on the latter occasion that Our Lord eight times openly described these men and their disciples (the Herodians) as “hypocrites.” [850] In the same discourse, He also called them “blind guides,” [851] “foolish and blind,” [852] “whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but are full of dead men’s bones and all filthiness,” [853] “full of hypocrisy and iniquity,” [854] “sons of them that kill the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of thy fathers,” [855] and addressed them as “you serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?” [856]

In their sanctimonious rage, they remained silent—but they chose to act quickly and furtively. Soon “were gathered together the chief priests and ancients of the people into the court of the high priest, who was called Caiphas. And they consulted together, that by subtlety they might apprehend Jesus, and put him to death. But they said: Not on the festival day, lest perhaps there should be a tumult among the people.” [857]

Those *Gospel* sentences reveal both their craftiness in plotting Christ’s death and their over-riding desire for human respect—for it was not God they feared, but the people! It was they, the elders of God’s first chosen ones, who plotted and carried out the stealthy and illegal arrest of Our Lord, twisting His words to suit their own purposes, allowing servants to spit in His face and strike Him, accusing the Lord Himself of blasphemy, and stirring up the multitude to a murderous frenzy, demanding Christ’s death! Yet, even when they had attained Jesus’ sentence of death by crucifixion, they were still not

satisfied. These instigators chose to follow Christ to Golgotha, so as to relish and gloat over every moment of His suffering.

Also among this first group were the soldiers and executioners of Rome. They were not down-trodden servants of the empire, forced to comply with an appalling command against one whom even Pilate, their governor, declared a “just man.” [\[858\]](#) Rather, these were debased men of the world, their interests malicious and sadistic. They delighted in scourging Our Lord almost to the point of death. Then, by their own volition, they clothed Him in purple, crowned Him with thorns, struck His Holy Face with a reed, spat on Him, insolently knelt before Him and contemptuously adored Him, and eagerly led Him out to crucify Him.

In imitating the men described above, those who lay the Cross upon Our Lord only follow the Way of the Cross because they take a malicious delight in abusing Jesus. Accordingly, such people “are all guilty of His Passion, and increase it by their cruelty and mockery.” [\[859\]](#)

They, too, carry a cross, but it is not a cross of faith and virtue. Rather, it is a cross of their own making, formed by their obstinate rejection of grace and loaded with their own sins. They are driven by any one, or more, of the seven deadly sins: pride, anger, envy, greed, gluttony, lust, and sloth. Through their own free will, they become the agents of Satan, “and it is his yoke that they drag along. This is an inglorious cross—a fatal cross, which leads not to redemption, but to eternal death. Whoever does not embrace the Cross of Jesus must bear that of Satan.” [\[860\]](#)

- In the second group are those who literally carry the Cross with Jesus. “And as they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country; and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus.” [\[861\]](#) In this escort were also the two thieves who were to be crucified beside Our Lord.

These three men are historical figure-types of souls who initially carry crosses only because exterior forces compel them. The internal reactions of free will to the events on the Way of the Cross determine their individual and eternal fates.

In the case of Simon the Cyrene: This man was returning from the country and had just entered the city gate when the soldiers forced him to take up Our Lord’s Cross. The soldiers did not act from a motivation of mercy, but because Jesus’ weakness and exhaustion was so great that they feared He would die before He was crucified.

Simon had his own plans for the day, not knowing “that grace was lying in wait for him on the road to Calvary—that hidden in the cross of pain and shame was laid up for him the highest honor and never-ending joy.” [862] So, too, we “rise in the morning and make our plans for the day. [But] God has made His for us. Turning a corner, we find the Cross of Christ awaiting us, and with it the grace that, with a little effort on our part, will enable us to bear it bravely after our Master.” [863]

So we understand, “It is for Simon’s sake much more than for His own that Our Lord shared His Cross with him. The virtue that came from its contact with the Son of God went out to him who followed in His footsteps. Quickly Simon learned his lesson. From bearing the Cross reluctantly, he came to bear it patiently, willingly, joyfully, reaching thus the highest perfection of which love is capable on earth.” [864]

As for the two thieves, individuals who spiritually belong to their entourage will interiorly select one of two choices, for there are no others. They will either trace the final steps of the man traditionally known as “Dismas, the Good Thief,” thus saving their souls—or they will stumble after the unrepentant thief, cursing fate and mocking Jesus to their last breaths, and thus die in their sins.

In their final choices, both thieves illustrated the final results of grace received or grace rejected. On the bitter Way of the Cross, both Dismas and the Unrepentant Thief saw Jesus fall three times, watched as Veronica courageously wiped Our Lord’s face, heard Him console the weeping women, and witnessed Christ’s meeting with His Mother, the Virgin Mary.

Both were crucified with Jesus—“And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.” [865] Still, the last hours of trial and grace were not yet over for them, and how each interiorly met his final moments were quite different.

As the *Gospel of St. Luke* briefly testifies, the Good Thief’s fellow robber blasphemed Jesus, after all three were crucified: “If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.” [866]

To the Unrepentant Thief, Our Lord did not respond. Jesus, being God, knew this man resisted His grace. Accordingly, this thief possessed neither compunction of heart nor any faith in Him. Yet the mystery of grace was at work, and the Savior waited—but for what? Christ on the Cross, whose very Presence is grace, awaited the free will reaction from “the other”—Dismas, the Good Thief—whose soul was now stirred to perfect contrition.

“But the other answering, rebuked him, saying: Neither dost thou fear

God, seeing thou art condemned under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus: Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him: Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” [\[867\]](#)

In those few sentences, so painfully uttered from his own cross, the Good Thief first reproached the other robber for scorning God and for his lack of pious fear of the Lord, even when death was approaching. With charity and honesty, Dismas included himself when he confessed their sentences as just punishment for their crimes. In doing so, the Good Thief showed his resignation and acceptance of his own cruel end as his penance. He not only defended Jesus as innocent, but he acknowledged Him as the Messiah and called Him “Lord.” Finally, he expressed his hope in Jesus, with his humble request of only Christ’s remembrance when He came into His Kingdom. And then came the Savior’s promise: “Amen, I say to you, this day thou shall be with Me in Paradise.” [\[868\]](#)

But what of the Unrepentant Thief? When rebuked by the Good Thief, the unrepentant one had no more words to hurl against Our Lord. He had no defense at all. Rather than follow the just example of the Good Thief, he instead chose to sink into final despair.

Like the Good Thief, he could have repented and confessed his sins. Like the Good Thief, he could have offered his sufferings as reparation for his crimes. Like the Good Thief, his own cross could have become a source of merit—if only he had accepted God's grace. But he did not. In his soul, he turned away from the Lord, and the final grace offered him was lost.

Two sinners, both given the same grace to die alongside Our Lord, to repent and to confess their sins, to seek pardon, to offer their deaths in reparation for their sins, to receive God's forgiveness after confession, to ask the Lord to remember them, to accept the fruits of the Redemption, and to merit eternal salvation. But only one—Dismas, the Good Thief—earned the Savior’s promise of salvation.

- Finally, there is the third escort: Those who participate in spirit on Our Lord’s Way of the Cross. “And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented him.” [\[869\]](#)

In the first part of this division, an immense number felt sympathy for Our Lord’s fate, and the women openly mourned Him. “This expression of their grief was right, and required great courage, since it was made in the

presence and the hearing of Our Lord's triumphant foes. What was imperfect about it was that they regarded Our Lord's Passion as pure misfortune, and bewailed it as such." [870]

Of this assembly, the majority are a type of the souls who feel pity for the sufferings of Jesus, but who lack an *effective* compassion—that is, good deeds. Still, Our Lord receives such tokens of grief and rewards it in His own way, as He did when offering His pity to the women and their children in His prophecy of Jerusalem. [871]

According to Tradition, out of this throng was a woman named Veronica. Of a rare and different type, she displayed her compassion in a small but practical, noble and courageous act. Despite the threatening presence of the first escort, she offered Christ her veil to wipe His beaten and bloody Face. This one service was her confession of faith and fidelity in Jesus, and He rewarded her by miraculously imprinting His Holy Face on the cloth.

Another minority within this group were "all his acquaintance, and the women that had followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things." Among them were Joseph of Arimethea, who would beg Pilate for the body of Jesus and laid Him in an untouched sepulchre, and the women who could only show their love for Him in their plans to return to His tomb with spices and ointments. [872]

Finally, we find in this multitude one who stands apart, the holiest of all women—the Virgin Mary, of whom Tradition relates awaited Her Divine Son on the Way of the Cross. "The Son and the Mother meet; but it is as the Redeemer and Co-Redemptrix of the world. The sacrifice that their mutual love increases occupies them entirely...and now His hour has come, the hour of which He had so often spoken to her at Nazareth, the hour that was the subject of such earnest prayer put up together; the hour for which He had promised to strengthen her that, first in privilege as in dignity, she might drink deeper than any other of His chalice." [873]

What, then, do we learn from these escorts on the Way of the Cross? "All of us have a cross to bear, [be it] the cross of sin and passion, the cross of misfortunes permitted by God, or the cross of penance and of love...Whoever we are, willing or unwillingly, we must form part of the escort of our Cross-bearing Savior." [874]

All we have to do is choose the escort to which we wish to belong.

PURGATORY: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S MERCY AND JUSTICE

“Out of the depths have I cried to thee O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If Thou, O Lord, shall observe iniquities; Lord, who shall endure it? For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness; and by reason of Thy law, I have waited for Thee, O Lord. My soul hath relied on his word; my soul hath hoped in the Lord. From the morning watch even until night, let Israel hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is merciful forgiveness and with Him plentiful redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

–*De Profundis, prayer from Psalm 129*

In the immediately preceding sections, the topics addressed included the life of ongoing conversion, why there is a need for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Precious Blood, our exaltation of the Holy Cross, our imitation of Christ, and the various escorts of Our Lord during His Passion. Inherent in all this are the four last things: death, judgment, heaven or hell. For the sake of souls living in an age permeated by the modernist heresy, it is not by chance that, at Fatima, Heaven highlighted the Church's doctrines and dogmas so frequently undermined. Perhaps foremost among these ignored truths is Purgatory, a doctrine pertaining to the interior life of the soul and the mercy and the justice of God.

The term, Purgatory, comes from the Latin *purgare*, which means “to purify” or “to cleanse.” “The word Purgatory is sometimes taken to mean a place, sometimes as an intermediate state between Hell and Heaven,” explains Fr. Schouppe, S.J., author of *Purgatory Explained by the Lives and the Legends of the Saints*. [875]

“It is, properly speaking, the condition of souls which, at the moment of death, are in the state of grace, but which have not completely expiated their faults, nor attained the degree of purity necessary to enjoy the Vision of God.” [876] Fr. Schouppe continues, “Purgatory is a transitory state which terminates in a life of everlasting happiness. It is not a trial by which merit may be gained or lost, but a state of atonement and expiation.” [877]

The dogma of Purgatory reinforces the necessity of the three conversions of the interior life, for “it forms one of the principal parts of the work of Jesus Christ, and plays an essential role in the economy of the salvation of man.” [878] We may think otherwise, but sanctity is not impossible, for Jesus

Himself encourages and instructs us, “Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect.” [879] Neither can we reach spiritual perfection by our own efforts, but “*with* God, all things are possible.” [880] For the living, each day of earthly life is “a time of trial, a time of merit for the soul,” [881] and at the very moment life ends, the immortal soul remains in the state in which death claimed it.

While we hope that our merits will gain us heaven, we must also remember that what we deem as only trivial faults are not small in God’s eyes. In considering Purgatory, our frail human nature frequently tends to think only of God’s mercy, simultaneously preferring to forget His Justice. Regardless of our personal opinions, God has revealed that His two attributes of Mercy and Justice are never separated.

Like the slightest shadow which must disappear before the sun’s bright light, “no shadow of sin can endure before His Face.” [882] Souls who depart this life in a state of sanctifying grace are saved and will attain Heaven, but if there is any debt still remaining for absolved sins, any slight lack of perfect charity in love for God or neighbor, then God’s Mercy and Justice allows the saved soul to expiate its sins in Purgatory.

Purgatory:

A Teaching from Antiquity

From the ancient tradition of the Jews, to the time of Christ and from the earliest days of His one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church, “the people of God had no hesitation in asserting the efficacy of prayers offered for the dead in order that those who had departed this life might find pardon for their sins and the hope of eternal resurrection.” [883]

With infallible examples from the Holy Scriptures and Tradition, the witness of the early Church, the Holy Ghost makes clear that forgiven sins can and will be atoned, either in this life or in the next:

- The Old Testament clearly states in *Macabees*, “It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.” [884] This passage tells of an offering of silver “to Jerusalem for sacrifices to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For if he (Judas of the Macabees) had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead.” [885]

- In *Zacharias*, the Holy Ghost speaks of the purification of souls in the next life, “I will refine them as silver refined, and I will try them as gold is

tried.” [886] Gold and silver are burned in the fire to be freed from dross; similarly, souls are tried and purified in fire by the Lord. [887]

- Our Lord Himself affirms that there is a place of expiation after death, likening it to a prison: “I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.” [888] Jesus refers not to hell, which is eternal, but teaches “distinctly of a temporary place...of purification, where the souls of the just can be freed...and purified for their entrance into heaven.” [889]

- Our Divine Savior also reveals: “And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.” [890]

Repented sins can be forgiven, and expiated in this world or the next, but the sin against the Holy Ghost is the terrible exception of which Christ warned the peoples of all ages—“*persistent impenitence*, the sin of one who rejects conversion and dies in mortal sin. One guilty of this sin can never obtain forgiveness of God, because at the hour of death he continues to thrust God away from him.” [891] Let us hear it again: The reason this sin is not forgiven in this world or the next is only because the *individual person* continues to reject God, even at death! Is it any wonder why **Our Lady of Fatima** so often stressed sacrifice for the conversion of our fellow sinners?

- **St. Paul** speaks of the exact way by which souls are freed from repented sins not yet atoned: “For other foundation (sic) no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus...Every man’s work shall be manifest: for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed *in fire*, and the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as *by fire*.” [892]

The Catholic Encyclopedia (1911) explains, “While this passage presents considerable difficulty, it is regarded by many of the Fathers and theologians as evidence for the existence of an intermediate state in which the dross of lighter transgressions will be burnt away, and the soul thus purified will be saved.” [893]

- **St. John the beloved disciple**, in offering hope and consolation to those who live in the valley of tears and faithfully endure all of life’s trials and tribulations, reveals: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more; nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be

any more.” [894] In speaking of Heaven, however, St. John also reminds the elect, “There shall not enter into it anything defiled.” [895]

- **St. Augustine of Hippo** teaches, “That there should be some fire even after this life is not incredible, and it can be inquired into and either be discovered or left hidden whether some of the faithful may be saved, some more slowly and some more quickly, in the greater or less degree in which they loved the good things that perish—through a certain purgatorial fire.” [896]

- Because the doctrine of Purgatory has been held throughout the ages, the **Council of Trent** declared: “Since the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost has, following the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught in sacred councils and very recently in this ecumenical council, that **there is a Purgatory**, and that the souls there detained are aided by the suffrages of the faithful and chiefly by the Acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar, **the Holy Council commands the bishops that they strive diligently to the end that the sound doctrine of Purgatory**, transmitted by the Fathers and the sacred councils, be believed and maintained by the faithful of Christ, and **be everywhere taught and preached.**” [897]

At Fatima:

The Fate of Two Souls Revealed

Finally, in recent times, Our Lady Herself referred to Purgatory when, at the first Fatima apparition in May 1917, she was asked by the child Lucia about the souls of two young village ladies who had recently died.

The Virgin answered that the first girl, Maria das Neves, who died when about 16 years of age, was **in Heaven**. But of Amelia, a young woman of 18 years at her death, Our Lady said, “She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world.” [898]

The latter disclosure about Amelia’s prolonged period of expiation never fails to shock and trouble those who first hear of it. While mere curiosity should not instigate the inquiry, it appears there is one immediate and common question about this revelation:

What did Amelia do? That is, what confessed and forgiven sin(s) committed by a young person (a “teenager” by today’s standards), who lived in a remote village without any modern conveniences or amusements, could lead to a Purgatory of such time and duration?

The only answer upon which we can assuredly rely comes from Sr. Lucia when, years later, she was asked by Fr. Thomas McGlynn, O.P, about certain

details regarding Amelia. Sr. Lucia's charitable, prudent, and brief response was befitting of a Servant of God: "Amelia was eighteen years old, Father, and, after all, for **one mortal sin** a soul may be in Hell forever." [899]

"Just" **one** mortal sin! Was Lucia's response a delicate hint that it was one mortal sin—obviously repented, confessed, and absolved—for which Amelia would endure a Purgatory incomprehensible to our minds? Did Our Lady make this known to Lucia? If such is the case, it still remains that we do not know the details of Amelia's solitary mortal sin—but neither do we need to know.

Instead, we should consider the reasons why Our Lady allowed to be made public the state of two souls, one who was already in Heaven (a revelation which many overlook) and one who would be in Purgatory until the end of time.

"What is certain is that Our Lady wanted us to know this for our instruction, and it would be foolish presumption to pretend to dispute the judgments of God," observes Fatima historian, Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. "He alone, Who intimately knows each soul, the abundance of graces He has given to it, the degree of knowledge it had of its fault and the quality of its repentance, is the judge of the gravity of sin." [900]

Frère Michel also wisely notes that we may rarely think about Maria das Neves, the young soul of whom Our Lady said so simply, "She is in heaven." No, we are not inclined to ponder much about Maria, for today we are misled to believe that Heaven is our natural "right." Perhaps, too, we make light-hearted jokes like, "Well, at least in Purgatory, I'll be with friends." Yet the sufferings of Purgatory are not objects of jest, for God is offended by sin, and even confessed and absolved sins must be atoned in this world or the next. The agonies of Purgatory are no joke, especially because the straight and sure path to Heaven is made known to us by Christ: *Pick up your cross daily and follow Me.* [901]

Should we not first contemplate the teenaged Maria, if only for a few moments, and wonder: How did she fulfill God's Commandments? What heroic virtues did she practice? Did she endure Purgatory at all, or was her soul taken straight to Heaven? Were inquiries ever made about the details of her life or death? Is there anything really known about this young lady, other than her name and age? **Or did her hidden and humble interior life**—in which (as it seems) no one showed interest, even when her glorious state in Heaven became known—**serve as a lesson in itself?**

Since it appears no questions about Maria were ever asked, we have no details. What we do have, however, is Our Lady's word that Maria is in Heaven, and that is enough to tell us two simple and beautiful things about Maria—"she was a good girl and a good Christian." [\[902\]](#)

Out of the Depths

I Have Cried to Thee, O Lord...

But we do not forget Amelia, who died in the state of grace and is saved, nor should we forget her. It is, after all, our "sacred duty to pray for and make sacrifices on behalf of the Poor Souls in Purgatory." [\[903\]](#)

We call these souls "**poor**" because they can do nothing for themselves, relying always on our charity offered on their behalf; we call them "**holy**" because there is no question that they are among the saved. Cherished by God and assured of their salvation, they can and do intercede for us with their prayers.

However, while the poor souls can pray for us, they can no longer gain merit for themselves, and since the saints in Heaven pray for them but cannot acquire any indulgences for them, those who languish in Purgatory rely on the charity of the living on earth.

This is the beautiful "secret" regarding Purgatory, as St. John Chrysostom reminds us, "Not by weeping, but by prayer and almsgiving are the dead relieved." [\[904\]](#) **It is only we**, the Church Militant, who can obtain many indulgences (plenary and partial) for the faithful departed. [\[905\]](#)

We have **three central means** at our disposal to offer them relief and deliverance: The Holy Mass, the Holy Rosary, and almsgiving (fasts, penances, and sacrifices). For the benefit of our own souls and those in Purgatory, there exist many other highly indulgenced prayers and practices, including but not limited to:

The Brown Scapular of Mt. Carmel: To those who wear this Scapular with devotion, Our Lady promises, "Whosoever dies wearing this Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire." Too, a pious kiss given to the Brown Scapular offers 500 days' indulgence, which we can offer for the Poor Souls.

The Sabbatine (Saturday) Privilege, also granted to those who wear the Brown Scapular: "I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death and whosoever I shall find in Purgatory, I shall free, so that I may lead them unto the holy mountain of life everlasting."

A Thousand Souls (the Prayer of St. Gertrude), by which Christ revealed He would release 1,000 souls from Purgatory, each time the prayer

is offered: “Eternal Father, I offer thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with all of the Masses said throughout the world today—for all the holy souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal Church, for those within my own home and within my own family. Amen.” [\[906\]](#)

Since God’s generosity can never be out-done, He not only allows all of our offerings to help the souls in Purgatory, but He also grants that these same actions “gain us merit, an increase in sanctifying grace, a higher degree of charity, closer union with God, and thus a higher degree of glory in Heaven for all eternity.” [\[907\]](#)

There is much more that Our God has revealed about Purgatory, but what is most important is to follow the charitable advice of the eternal Church, and which is so beautifully summarized by St. Augustine: “Forget not the dead and *hasten* to pray for them!” [\[908\]](#)

Part 18

Secrets of the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart

“To whoever embraces this devotion, I promise salvation; those souls will be cherished by God, as flowers placed by Me to adorn His throne.”

–*Our Lady of Fatima*

“You have seen hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart.”

[909] Such were the opening words of the Virgin Mother of God when, in July 1917, she revealed to three shepherd children a secret in three distinct parts, known as “The Great Secret of Fatima.”

“If what I say to you is done,” the Lady continued, “many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end, but *if people do not cease offending God*, a worse one will break out during the reign of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.”

“To prevent this, *I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays*. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated.”

“In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a certain period [era] of peace will be granted to the world. In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved; *etc.*” (sic)

To this day, Our Lady’s requests at Fatima are still not heeded throughout the Church. Instead, it is wrongly insisted that what was prophesied at Fatima is in the past and all that remains of the Virgin’s words is a heavily-diluted message: “Pray the Rosary for world peace.” Rare are the parish priests who advocate the *daily* Rosary or promote the Five First Saturdays of Reparation for the five major blasphemies against the Blessed Virgin (all of which are sins against faith).

The hierarchy of the Church has not, as one collegial body, universally propagated filial devotion to the Mother of God. To eradicate even greater errors (heresies and mortal sins) that would soon spread throughout the world, Our Lady also asked that the Pope and bishops spiritually unite together, on one day, to solemnly consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart –but that, too, has not been done. Nor is much attention paid to Our Lady’s revelation of what she wanted, made on the very day of the Miracle of the Sun on October 13, 1917: “*Do not offend the Lord our God any longer. He is already deeply offended.*” [\[910\]](#)

Centuries ago, Our Lady revealed, “*One day, through the Rosary and the Scapular, I shall save the world.*” One ponders why the Virgin made no mention of the Holy Sacrifice, which leads one to further wonder if or when the Mass will one day completely disappear. One can only consider how close is that day when the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, shall save the world through the Rosary and the Scapular. Awash with confusion, Her Divine Son’s only Church is besieged by the world, where Our Lord is rarely adored in the Holy Tabernacle (if He can be found at all), where the light of Faith is eclipsed, where the faithful cannot easily avail themselves of the Sacraments, where the very words of the infallible Scriptures are revised and updated, where contemporary catechesis is permeated with modernist thought, where mortal sin is rampant, and where heinous crimes are reported daily.

In this insanely inverted world, anything that is even lightly scented as “traditional Catholicism” is odiously distasteful to the olfactory senses of the rationalist, whether it be articles of faith, dogmas, doctrines, sacraments, sacramentals, and other long-standing beliefs, prayers, and practices of the Church. All this is only a part of the Church’s persecutions, which the Virgin foretold at Fatima. History proves that, with the exception of the annihilation of nations and the Third Secret (which may yet be fulfilled), all which Our Lady of Fatima prophesied came to pass.

In different degrees, the Church is everywhere persecuted. Good people are still being martyred, but we do not hear of that in mainstream news. In the more “fortunate” countries, the persecution comes in different forms. Catechesis for the laity and the training of priests, nuns, and other religious has long been doctrinally diluted, with disastrous results. While parishes are closing, bishops and pastors “circle the wagons” against the Tridentine Rite of Liturgy, feigning obedience to the Pope whilst simultaneously seeking

loopholes in *Summorum Pontificum*, Pope Benedict XVI's *Motu Proprio* of July 7, 2007.

An increasing number of Catholics attend Mass for the “fellowship,” but they do not believe in Transubstantiation—i.e., that Christ is truly present (Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity) in the Holy Eucharist. Those who do believe in the efficacy of the Sacraments are forced into the uncomfortable position of examining the form, matter, and priestly intent. Many Catholics wrongly disregard their absolute need for the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. On the other side of the same coin, many priests fail to acquiesce to requests for Extreme Unction or the baptism of newborn babies in danger of death [\[911\]](#)—and the list goes on and on.

Attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation are for “those *really* Catholic” people. Those who do wish to avail themselves of Confession and seek pardon and absolution frequently find the sacrament is available only once a week (and usually allotted to a total of 30 minutes for one priest to hear all those waiting in the confessional line). Catholics who confess on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule may find themselves harshly dismissed by the priest in the confessional and told that their habitual practice of Confession reveals that said penitent does not trust the Lord. Pedophile or otherwise lascivious “priests” are protected but “tradition-friendly” priests, while sought out by the laity, either learn to hide their “leanings” or are inevitably assigned to the most dangerous parts of cities or booted to the boondocks by their bishops.

From the pulpit, the souls of Catholics who receive Our Lord on the tongue are publicly, unjustly and artfully shamed by their own priests who falsely accuse them of possessing “reserved hearts that are closed to others.” Convicted of lacking in charity towards their neighbor (based solely on the reverent position of their hands while receiving Holy Communion), those who physically display a proper attitude of reverence are admonished that they are only concerned about their own relationship with Christ (the accuser conveniently ignoring the first Great Commandment which declares that charity is first aimed toward God and secondly, that God has always taught our first obligation is to save our own souls). Meanwhile, those who receive the consecrated Host in outstretched hands (regardless of the fact that many actually chew the Body of Christ like a piece of gum that must be hastily swallowed) are praised for having “hearts that are open to others.” (And lest we forget, those who kneel for Holy Communion are often maliciously

treated by the officiating priest, forced to stand—or otherwise denied the Body of Christ.)

Daily prayer and sacrifice are incorrectly perceived as practices for the overly-pious. Praying the daily Rosary is wrongly considered to be either much too difficult or appeals only to religious fanatics (often called “fundamentalists”). Again, in mainstream Catholic parishes, the First Friday and First Saturday devotions are rarely found. As for wearing the Brown Scapular of Mt. Carmel, the Miraculous Medal, or other Church-approved sacramentals, the faithful are too often and wrongfully told that they are not necessary and/or that those “old-fashioned things” are worn by people who either think they are “holier-than-thou” or are judged by others to be “off the deep end.”

Tragically, many a poor soul succumbs to these and other erroneous notions, conned by a false conception of holy obedience or humiliated into compliance by fear of human respect. Some flee the Church and never return. Others, through some mysterious grace of Faith, endure. Among the latter, God will lead them to learn that everything previously mentioned (traditional catechesis, the Tridentine Rite of Liturgy, prayer, sacrifice, regular reception of the Sacraments, respectful posture and gestures when receiving Christ in the Eucharist, the right use of sacramentals like blessed medals, scapulars, and holy water, the habitual practice of the virtue of charity—first to God, secondly to neighbor—and standing patiently firm against the temptation to conform to the onslaughts of the misinformed or the spiteful) constitutes their fidelity to their daily duty *as Catholics*.

Is it any wonder, then, that Jesus Christ spoke of “daily duty” to Sr. Lucia, of which she wrote, “He (Our Lord) wishes that it be made clear to souls that the true penance He wants and requires consists first of all in the sacrifice that each one must make to fulfill his own religious and temporal duties”? [\[912\]](#) In other words, Our Lord made it clear that our “true penance” would be the faithful fulfillment of our loving obligations *to Him* and *in* our states in life. In this day, to accomplish our daily duty *as Catholics* means practice of all the virtues to a heroic degree.

Why Devotion to the Immaculate Heart?

What is the cure to these ongoing disasters? Why does the Lord God wish to save poor sinners from eternal perdition by establishing world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary? Our Lady herself gave the answer when she said to the three children (and through them, to each one of us),

“Are you suffering a great deal? I will never abandon you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the path that leads you to God.” [913]

Mary, the Mother of God, is also the true Mother of all men and Queen of all Hearts. We have already seen that Pope Pius XII expressed the depths of these mysteries of the King and Queen in the following way: “Jesus is King of the Eternal Ages by nature and by right of conquest; *through* Him, *with* Him, and *subordinate* to Him, Mary is Queen by grace, by divine relationship, by right of conquest, and by singular election. And her kingdom is as vast as that of Her Son and God, *since nothing is excluded from Her dominion.*” [914]

Our Lady Mother and Queen promises each one of us that her Immaculate Heart will be our *refuge*—i.e., our sanctuary, our safe haven, our place of shelter and retreat. She further promises that this same sanctuary is “the path that leads you to God.” Like the secret that God would become Man was “hidden from ages and generations” [915] until it was publicly manifested at Bethlehem when the Christ Child was found “with Mary his Mother,” [916] the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is found in the Deposit of Faith. It, too, falls under what St. Bonaventure called “the general law of preparation.”

It has been heretofore mentioned that this law refers to the way God provided Divine Revelation to make ready the human race for His “undoing of the awful consequences of Original sin taken in conjunction with *man’s response to God’s overtures.*” [917] With those last five words, we are given an important reminder about **free will**, which is the faculty of choice. At Fatima, Our Lady emphasized that *people* must stop offending the Lord God. She did not mark any office or class as that which most offends the Holy Trinity; she neither placed all the blame on the hierarchy nor on the laity. She simply said “people,” which includes every human being, especially within the Church, the kingdom of God on earth.

May we daily turn to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, honored by the Church with the Feast of the Immaculate Heart (August 22) which falls on the octave of the holy day of obligation, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15). May we also pray, study and act to save our own souls and that of others by prayer and sacrifice because, as written elsewhere in this work:

When on a great scale mankind abandons God and tempts Him to turn His face from us, Our Lady’s continual intercession is the last means to save

souls: that is the reason why God wishes to establish devotion to the Immaculate Heart. When we are tempted to think we have nowhere to go for help, we cannot forget Our Lady of Fatima's consoling words: *My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the path that leads you to God.*

**A MYSTERY OF MERCY:
THE VIRGIN MARY AS MOTHER**

“Mary was raised to the dignity of Mother of God rather for sinners than for the just, since Jesus Christ declares that He came to call not the just, but sinners.”

–St. Anselm

“Why does the Lord God wish to save poor sinners from eternal perdition by establishing world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary?” At Fatima, “Our Lady herself gave the answer when she said to the three children (and through them, to each one of us), ‘*Are you suffering a great deal? I will never abandon you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the path that leads you to God.*’ ” [\[918\]](#)

The origins and development of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary are found in the Deposit of Faith (otherwise known as Divine Revelation, which issues from Tradition and Scripture). It, too, falls under what is coined as “the general law of preparation.” This law, so often mentioned because it is so essential in understanding the Deposit of Faith, refers to the way God provided Divine Revelation to make ready the human race for His “undoing of the awful consequences of Original Sin taken in conjunction with *man’s response to God’s overtures.*” [\[919\]](#)

Throughout the Church’s history, “we find that God in His wisdom and goodness has inspired and directed the minds of men to the clarification of various points of revelation. One after another in a pattern fully understood only by God, these treasures have been brought to the fore by saint and scholar, considered profoundly, and submitted to the infallible magisterium of the Church. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church has

investigated and explained century after century the many secrets of the Godhead hidden in the depths of Christian revelation. Through this unfolding of the ineffable truths of revelations, souls are drawn to God, the source of every good.” [920] Since our faith teaches that Divine Revelation is a world of mystery but not of contradiction, we believe all that God has revealed to us. [921]

We see the “general law of preparation” in the Old Testament’s opaque revelation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. As already discussed, the first implicit hint of the Old Testament’s “general law of preparation” for the revelation of the Triune God appeared in the history of creation when the Lord said, “Let *us* make man to our image and likeness.” St. Augustine noted similar utterances from God about His plurality: “Behold, Adam is become as one of *us*,” [922] and “Let *us* go down, and there confound their tongue.” [923] The triple Sanctus of *Isaias*, “Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of Hosts,” [924] and the triple blessing recorded in *Numbers* [925] are also opaque heralds of the sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity. There are, however, many others.

Scriptural prophecies of the coming Savior and His Mother are found throughout the Old Testament. As already discussed, the first prophecy of this was declared by the Holy Trinity and is known to us as the *proto-evangelion* (the “first Good News”) in *Genesis 3:15*. From the beginning, then, we see that the Lord God Himself formed an irrevocable union between Jesus Christ and his Mother, full of grace.

Divine Revelation closed with the passing of the last surviving Apostle, St. John the Evangelist, one of the two Apostles whom Jesus called the sons of thunder, [926] in order “to express the strength and activity of their faith in publishing the law of God, without fearing the power of man.” [927] Lest we forget, St. John is called the *Apostle of the Sacred Heart*, to which the Immaculate Heart is so intimately connected.

He is also known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” [928] which is not to say that Our Lord did not love the other Apostles. Rather, St. John is the beloved disciple because he was the Apostle most like Our Lord (and we may also truly say, like Our Lady)—a virgin in mind, body, and soul, a virgin great in charity towards God and man, a virgin strong in faith and hope and yet humble of heart. Due to this Apostle’s great love for Our Lord and His Virgin Mother, St. John was the only member of the newly-established Church hierarchy to stand with Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross. In overcoming his

own fears of persecution and possible death, St. John chose to follow Jesus during His Passion and assist Our Lady in her greatest sorrow.

In his *Gospel*, St. John recorded that Our Lord, looking down at His Mother and the disciple (himself), said: “Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother.” [\[929\]](#) St. John continued: “And from that hour, *the disciple took her to his own*. Afterwards, Jesus *knowing that all things were now accomplished*, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst.” [\[930\]](#)

Let us take special care to note that it was only *after* Jesus addressed His Mother as “Woman,” and *after* St. John “took her to his own” that Christ knew “all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled.” In his *Gospel*, St. John revealed that Jesus first spoke to Mary, His Mother, rather than to him (an Apostle). This is highly relevant because first, Our Lady’s office is even higher than that of the Apostles and, second, because Our Lord’s brief words to the Virgin and St. John are not a matter of only asking the Apostle to take care of Mary.

In speaking of Scriptural fulfillment, St. John recognized the unfolding of “the general law of preparation” found throughout the Old Testament. “For this purpose, the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil,” as St. John would later write. He further grasped the prophecy of *Genesis 3:15* about *the woman and her seed*. Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Savior, and Mary is “the Woman” prophesied—the “Woman” who is to be accepted and honored as Mother. Christ is the only-begotten of the Ages but He is also truly the Son of Mary. The faithful who follow Him also become the “seed” of the “Woman,” Mary. For if Christ is First-born and “Brother,” then Mary is, indeed, Mother. To emphasize this truth, Our Lord stated simply to St. John: “Behold thy Mother.”

As for St. John, who became the living figure-type for all of the elect until this world ends, he took Our Lady “to” (not “for”) his own. St. John heard, believed, and immediately acted upon Christ’s three simple words to him: “Behold thy mother.” He did not hesitate, he did not question, and he did not wrangle with sophistries. Although his own mother lived, he was to accept Mary as Mother, too.

Fully understanding Our Lord’s revelation that Mary is also our *Mother* in the order of grace, it was “from that hour that the disciple took her *to his own*.” This fact again points to “the general law of preparation,” the mystery unveiled by Christ on the Cross. Mary is mother to “the disciple whom Jesus

loved,” which means she is Mother to all Christians.

Quoting a celebrated writer, St. Alphonsus wrote in *The Glories of Mary* “‘that it was, properly speaking, on Mount Calvary that Jesus formed His Church;’ and then it is evident that the Blessed Virgin cooperated in a most excellent and especial manner in the accomplishment of this work. And in the same way it can be said, that though she brought forth the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, without pain, she did not bring forth the body of this Head without very great suffering, and so it was on Mount Calvary that Mary began, in an especial manner, to be the Mother of the whole Church.”

The saint continued, “To say all in a few words, Almighty God, in order to glorify the mother of the Redeemer, has ordained that her great charity should intercede for all those for whom her Divine Son offered and paid the super-abundant ransom of His Precious Blood, in which alone is our salvation, life, and resurrection.” [\[931\]](#)

The Immaculate Heart: A Secret of God

“*Secret things to the Lord our God: things that are manifest, to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*” [\[932\]](#) Found in the Old Testament’s *Book of Deuteronomy*, the verse is briefly explained in a footnote of the Douay-Rheims translation of the *Holy Bible*, as follows: “As much as to say, secret things belong to, and are known to, God alone; our business must be to observe what He has revealed and manifested to us, and to direct our lives accordingly.”

When we look to the *Holy Bible* (from *Genesis* through the *Apocalypse*), we know we shall find both opaque “secrets” about Our Lord, Our Lady, and the future of the Church. Tradition cannot be forgotten, either, since St. Paul is clear that we must hold fast to Tradition and Scripture, the two pillars of Divine Revelation.[\[933\]](#)

Throughout the long centuries since Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, the Lord God has been ever-so-slowly manifesting the Virgin Mary’s office in His plan of Redemption. Four thousand years before Advent, the Woman (Mary) and Her seed (Jesus, the God-Man and Savior, and those who follow Him, who are her children in the order of grace) were prophesied by God Himself. In a similar manner, the doctrine of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as necessary for salvation is brought to the world when God deems that it is most needed.

“It was through Mary that the salvation of the world was begun,” wrote St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, “and it is through Mary that it must be

consummated. **Mary hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ**, in order that men, as yet but little instructed and enlightened on the Person of her Son, should not remove themselves from Him in attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her...**But in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**, Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Ghost in order that through her Jesus Christ may be known, loved, and served. The reasons which moved the Holy Ghost to hide His spouse during her life, and to reveal her but very little since the preaching of the *Gospel*, subsist no longer.” [\[934\]](#)

In his own way, St. Louis-Marie was referring to “the general law of preparation.” The saint specifically mentioned that further knowledge and revelation of Mary (by the Holy Ghost) is the prerequisite to the Parousia –i.e., the Second Coming of Jesus. When we further consider that, in 1917, Our Lady clearly stated, “God wishes to establish throughout the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart,” there is certainly ample reason to pause and consider how late must be the days of this world. However, like St. John the Apostle, we should not hesitate but simply take Mary “to” our own.

In the *Gospel of St. Mark*, Our Lord forewarned of a time when there would arise false Christs and false prophets, who will show great signs and wonders, “to seduce (if it were possible) even the elect.” [\[935\]](#) St. Matthew’s record of Christ’s words is almost identical to St. Mark’s. However, instead of saying “to seduce,” St. Matthew states “insomuch as to *deceive* (if possible) even the elect.” [\[936\]](#)

In the Modern Age, wherein every Church dogma, doctrine and article of faith is under attack, wherein Our Lord and His saints—especially Mary, the Virgin Mother of God—are blasphemed, the faithful would do well to not only act by practicing devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but also to study its history. For, as St. Paul admonished the Ephesians: “*Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil.*” [\[937\]](#)

THE REMEDY: AN IMMENSE DEVOTION

“The Virgin received Salvation so that she may give it back to the centuries.”

–*St. Peter Chrysologus, Sermon 140 (ante A.D. 450)*

In the years since the Fatima apparitions, in which Our Lady clearly stated that “*God wishes to establish throughout the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart,*” the truth remains that “...Mary is not half enough preached. Devotion to her is low and thin and poor. It is frightened out of its wits by the sneers of heresy. It is always invoking human respect and carnal prudence, wishing to make Mary so little of a Mary that Protestants may feel at ease about her. Its ignorance of theology makes it unsubstantial and unworthy. It is not the prominent characteristic of our religion which it ought to be. It has no faith in itself. Hence it is that Jesus is not loved, that heretics are not converted, that the Church is not exalted; that souls, which might be saints, wither and dwindle; that the Sacraments are not rightly frequented, or souls enthusiastically evangelized.” [938]

The quote above was written over 150 years ago, by Fr. Frederick William Faber in his *Translator’s Preface* to St. Louis Marie de Montfort’s *A Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary with Preparation for Total Consecration*. [939] In the same preface, with words that still apply to the plight of the faithful, Fr. Faber had previously written:

“All those who are likely to read this book love God, and lament that they do not love Him more; all desire something for his glory—the spread of some good work, the success of some devotion, the coming of some good time. One man has been striving for years to overcome a particular fault, and has not succeeded. Another mourns, and almost wonders why he mourns, that so few of his relations and friends have been converted to the faith. One grieves that he has not devotion enough; another that he has a cross to carry, which is a particularly impossible cross to him; while a third has domestic troubles and family unhappinesses, which feel almost incompatible with his salvation; and for all these things, prayer appears to bring so little remedy.”

“But what is the remedy that is wanted? What is the remedy indicated by God Himself?” Fr. Faber understandably asked. “If we may rely on the disclosures of the Saints, it is an immense increase of devotion to Our Blessed Lady; but, remember, nothing short of an *immense* one.” [940]

A Glimpse at the Devotion's History

The necessary devotion to Our Lady, especially to her Immaculate Heart, is not a spontaneous development in the Church. Like other Marian doctrines in the Deposit of Faith, which closed with the death of St. John the Evangelist, this elevated piety to Mary's Heart is like the tiny bud of a rose, slowly blossoming throughout the centuries. In taking a very brief look at this devotion's history, we must remember the three following things:

- First, the Church and her children will always rely on Divine Revelation, which issues from either long-standing Tradition or Scripture or both;
- Second, we remember that Divine Revelation, given only to the Church founded by Christ and interpreted correctly only by this same Church through the Magisterium (Ordinary and Extraordinary), continues to ensue until the last day of this world's existence;
- Third, we recall "the general law of preparation," which refers to the way God provided Divine Revelation to make ready the human race of His "undoing of the awful consequences of Original Sin, taken in conjunction with man's response to God's overtures." [\[941\]](#) This law spans throughout all of Divine Revelation which, of course, includes the past, the present, and the future.

The question of the proofs of this doctrine (devotion to the Immaculate Heart) are somewhat akin (but not identical) to those which led to the solemn dogmatic definition of the Assumption of Mary. That particular doctrine, as Fr. Garrigou-LaGrange wrote, was "not possible to prove *directly* from Sacred Scripture nor from primitive documents...it can be proved *indirectly* from later documents that there was at least an implicit revelation [to the Apostles or at least to one of them] since there are certain facts" that are "explicable in no other way." [\[942\]](#)

Conversely, the doctrine of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary can be indirectly proved from both Holy Scripture and Tradition, which includes commentaries on the *Canticles* from Church Fathers like St. Hippolytus of Rome (170-235 A.D.), St. Ephrem (306-373 A.D.), St. Ambrose (340-397 A.D.), St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395 A.D.), St. Peter Chrysologus (560-636 A.D.), and St. John Damascene (676-749 A.D.).

In recent times, Pope Pius XII alluded to the historical fact that "remote vestiges of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Our Blessed Mother are to be found in the commentaries of the Fathers on the Sponsa [Spouse] of the

Canticle of Canticles...for the bride of the *Canticle*, adorned with the beauty of spotless purity and deep affection for her spouse, is a figure [type] most appropriate to the Mother of God.” [943] In addition, there are “innumerable passages in the *Canticle of Canticles* which the Fathers apply to the *Singula Anima Fidelus*, or adoring soul,” which certainly applies to the Virgin Mary, the “most perfect of all souls and the most worthy to be called the spouse of the Bridegroom.” [944]

Even further, the *Canticle* includes two verses which mention the Heart of the Beloved, as follows: “*I sleep, and my heart watcheth: the voice of my beloved knocking: Open to me, my sister, my love, my undefiled*” (Cant. 5:2). Of this verse, St. Isidore of Seville (560-636 A.D.) said it means, “Open to me, that is, reveal to me thy heart, my sister, my undefiled, *because you alone are worthy of my sight.*” [945] Alain de l’Isle (1128-1203 A.D.) understood the same verse as referring to the Blessed Virgin before the Incarnation of Christ, believing that “*I sleep*” referred to Our Lady’s complete freedom from motherly anxieties and concerns, while the words “*and my heart watcheth*” refers to her constant contemplation of the Divine. [946]

“*Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm*” (Cant. 8:6). The afore-mentioned Alain de l’Isle’s commentary on this verse states the Virgin Mary so carried Christ as a seal upon her Heart that through imitation of Him, she came more and more to resemble Him. [947] Of the words “...*he set in order charity in me*” (Cant. 2:4), he wrote, “In whom was charity formed, if not in the Virgin Mary; who loved Christ from the depths of her heart...” [948]

We know that almost every page of the Old Testament includes prophecy, figure-types, and attributes applicable to the Holy Mother of God. In the *Psalms*, she appears as the Sanctuary and in the *Book of Wisdom*, she is the “first-born daughter of God” and the “heavenly Queen of the world,” but there are many other examples. When we look to the *New Testament*, however, we find a few explicit references to her which possess deep and precious meaning. Specifically, in the *Gospel of St. Luke*, it is found that, three times, the word “heart” is used in connotation to Mary.

- At the Nativity, upon hearing the shepherds reveal how angels directed them to find the Christ Child: “...*all who heard marveled at the things told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.* (Luke 2:19)

- At the Presentation of the Divine Infant in the Temple, Simeon the

Prophet said to the Virgin Mary: *Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.* (Luke 2:35)

- After the three day disappearance of the Christ Child, and the mysterious words He spoke to Our Lady: *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart.* (Luke 2:51)

Hence, we see that twice do the Scriptures declare that Mary “kept” these words in her Heart, while once, the Holy Ghost inspired St. Simeon to speak to Our Lady, prophesying that the *thoughts* of many hearts shall be revealed by the piercing of her own *soul*. In this one heavenly-inspired announcement, Christ is proclaimed to Israel by the Holy Ghost—and so is Mary’s office in the Redemption, for otherwise why should the piercing of her soul possess any power to reveal the thoughts “out of many hearts”? We know Simeon’s words are not literal in every aspect, because neither Scripture nor Tradition subsequently teach that a sword ever touched Mary’s body; the prophecy specifically speaks of her *soul*, not her Heart. How, then, should these mysterious allusions to Mary’s heart and soul be properly understood? The astounding answer is given by the Church Fathers, who “depict Mary’s Heart as the receptacle or *tabernacle for the divine mysteries and augments of faith.*” [\[949\]](#)

Furthermore, in describing the eight meanings of the word “heart” in Sacred Scripture, St. John Eudes explained, “We must understand by the word ‘heart’ that highest part of the **soul** which theologians call the *point of the spirit*. It is the seat of contemplation, which consists in turning the mind directly toward God and viewing Him in all simplicity, without discursive reasoning or multiplicity of thoughts. The Fathers of the Church apply to this power of the soul those words which the Holy Ghost puts in the mouth of the Blessed Virgin Mary: ‘I sleep, and my *heart* watcheth.’ According to St. Bernadine of Siena and several other writers, sleep and rest of the body did not prevent Mary’s holy heart—that is, the highest part of her mind—from being always united to God in sublime contemplation.” [\[950\]](#)

The Slowly-Germinating Seeds

Like the blue spruce tree, with its very slow growth rate but which, upon reaching its full maturity, will live and stand magnificently for centuries, the same fact of slow maturation applies to devotion to the Immaculate Heart of

Mary. In the time-span between the Patristic era and the twelfth century, wherein the greatest saints of the Church began to arise, there are scant references to Mary's Heart. The seeds of the devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart are found in the Scriptures, but the first signs of their germination are found in Tradition.

Not long before St. Bernard's time, there exist a few references to the joys and sorrows of Mary's Heart; St. Anselm links the Immaculate Heart of Mary with her role as Co-Redemptrix, but it is St. Bernard, in his sermon *Dominica Infra Octavam Assumptionis B. V. Mariae*, who left a historical record of particular devotion to the Heart of Mary. Then came St. Bernadine of Siena and later, St. John Eudes and St. Alphonsus di Liguori, who strikingly stand out in their propagation of profound piety to the *Heart* of Mary or the glories of Mary. Church history proves that devotion to Our Lady reached its peak in the Middle Ages. It would seem, then, to be no coincidence that, as devotion to Our Lady's Heart grew, so did the number of saints.

Tragically, this devotion began to wane, due in great part to the Protestant and French Revolts—and the terrible effects are not only still with us, but they have grown stronger and are increasingly widespread. Don Sharkey, author of *The Woman Shall Conquer*, noted, "The leaders of the Protestant Revolt, in their hatred for everything Catholic, struck especially at Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and at devotion to the Blessed Virgin. These, ironically, *are the very things we need most in our struggle for salvation.*" [\[951\]](#)

Countless are the number of Catholics who knew these truths and were martyred, simply because they resisted Martin Luther, the Catholic priest who, after Judas, may be the world's most infamous apostate. They also resisted the princes who were rather delighted with Luther's blasphemous and boorish tirades. The faithful Catholics of England resisted King Henry VIII, the once-Catholic king who, due to his unbridled lust and pride, became an adulterer, a heretic, and a mass-murderer of his wives and his subjects. The Catholics who did not acquiesce to the king's demands (or those of his illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth, when she became queen) were martyred.

Next on the historical scene came the "progressivists" of the so-called Enlightenment, with their insane ideas of a "Man" with a "new order," a "new paradigm," and a "new era," a "Man" who does not need God. These prideful ideas were inevitably followed by the French Revolt, with its

outright, wholesale denial of God, His Church, and Divine Revelation, all of which led to the vicious persecutions and martyrdoms of the royal Catholic family of France and the faithful from all walks of life.

There is much more history that could be mentioned, but may it suffice to say this: For almost five centuries now, the Catholic Faith, which is what made Europe and made “Western Civilization,” is suffering from the most insidious forms of heretical attacks. With the Church, the whole world suffers for, as the old maxim declares, “As Rome goes, so goes the world.” And so we return to the question, asked by Fr. Faber only 150 years ago:

“But what is the remedy that is wanted? What is the remedy indicated by God Himself? If we may rely on the disclosures of the Saints, it is an immense increase of devotion to Our Blessed Lady; but, remember, nothing short of an *immense* one.” [\[952\]](#)

A MYSTERY OF SALVATION: THE SYNTHESIS OF ALL DEVOTIONS

“If I have found favor in thy sight, oh king, give me my people for which I request.”

–*Book of Esther 7:23*

Most of us understand that when we say of another, “She has a good heart,” we are referring to the interior goodness of the person, a moral integrity perceived by an individual’s words and actions. It follows that when we speak of Mary’s Immaculate Heart, we are truly speaking of her whole *person*. Therefore, devotion to the Immaculate Heart means a filial devotion to the *person* of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God who is assumed body and soul into Heaven. The synthesis of all devotions to the Virgin Mary is found in devotion to her Immaculate Heart, which includes (but is not limited to) the praying of the Holy Rosary.

“The Church says of her person that Mary is ‘the temple of the Lord, the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost,’” as St. John Eudes wrote, “and we can apply these words with still better reason to her Admirable Heart, having seen that it is the source of all the qualities and excellences with which she is adorned.” [953] What St. John Eudes called “the Admirable Heart of Mary” is the Immaculate Heart of Mary, “the receptacle or *tabernacle for the divine mysteries and augments of faith*.” [954]

St. Louis de Montfort taught, “Mary is the sanctuary and the repose of the Holy Trinity, where God dwells more magnificently and more divinely than in any other place in the universe...**Neither is it allowed to any creature**, no matter how pure, to enter into that sanctuary **without a great and special privilege**.” [955] At Fatima, however, Our Lady expressly said that God wills the universal devotion to her Immaculate Heart. Since this same Heart is the tabernacle of God, can we even begin to understand the “great and special privilege” that is offered to us when Our Lady invites us to take refuge in her Immaculate Heart?

“*Then rose up her children*.” [956] Richard of St. Laurence, commenting on *Proverbs*, remarked that one cannot be a child of Mary who does not first rise from the iniquity into which he has fallen. To this he added, “The sons of Mary are her imitators in chastity, humility, meekness, mercy.” As the ultimate tonic to eradicate the rising errors of the modernist heresy and those of atheistic Russia, Our Lady came to Fatima, there to implore her

children to rise up, amend their lives, and cease offending God, Who is already much offended.

Why the Virgin Mary Draws Our Attention

“In the person of Mary, a daughter of Adam like ourselves, God sets before us an accomplished model, but one more adapted to our weakness.” [957] What is it in the Virgin Mary that appeals to our human weaknesses? She attracts us because she is a mother, the embodiment of all that is loving, self-sacrificing, compassionate, understanding, graceful and strong, interceding and protecting. She draws us because, like us, she is fully human, and yet she alone is “the most perfect master-piece which nature and grace combined have ever formed of a simple creature.” [958]

Grace and mercy are what we inherently perceive in the Virgin Mary. “Wherefore St. Anselm well remarks that when we implore the Holy Virgin to obtain graces for us, it is not that we distrust the divine mercy, but rather that we distrust our own unworthiness, and commend ourselves to Mary that her merits may compensate for our unworthiness,” as St. Alphonsus de Liguori wrote. [959] Centuries later, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange [960] stated, “Theologians note that she does not seem to share in any special way in the royal judicial power of inflicting punishment for sin, for Tradition calls her not the Mother of Justice but the *Mother of Mercy*, a title which is hers in virtue of her mediation of all graces. [961] Jesus seems to have kept to Himself the reign of justice [962] as is becoming [of] Him who is the ‘*judge of the living and the dead*.’” [963]

“The Church, in devotion to the Immaculate Heart, does not exclude Mary’s extraordinary love for God in celebrating in a special way her maternal love for men; thus we might summarize the spiritual element in our devotion as the charity of Mary toward God, her love for Christ, and especially her love for us as her spiritual children.” [964] As the Virgin full of grace who is also Mother Most Merciful, Our Lady Mary is the flawless human image of her Creator. Her Immaculate Heart reflects the glory and virtues of Christ’s Sacred Heart. In all these truths are glimpsed the mysteries of salvation for, prior to His Incarnation, the Word created His own Mother. He created her Immaculate, not only free from Original Sin but also full of grace.

Jesus Christ had no human father, so it is from the Virgin Mother that He formed His Body. From her beautiful countenance came the masculine form

of His Holy Face. Her blood is the source of Our Lord's Precious Blood, by which all mankind is offered redemption. Her Immaculate Heart, as previously mentioned, was the pattern from which Our Lord traced His Sacred Heart. Jesus is the source of our salvation, but the sinless Virgin Mary is the cause due to the *Fiat* ("Let it be done") of her own free will. It is for these reasons that St. Bonaventure wrote in such simple and beautiful words, "All salvation springs from Mary's Heart." [965]

Secrets in the Order of Grace

De Maria nunquam satis! [966] St. John Eudes asks: "How much more, then, should we not honor and magnify Our Savior in the Heart of His Blessed Mother?" [967]

"To be devout to you, O holy Virgin," says St. John Damascene, "is an arm of salvation which God gives to those whom he wishes to save." [968] St. Alphonsus boldly declared that "the intercession of Mary is necessary to salvation." In a similar manner, St. Louis de Montfort taught, "Our Blessed Lady is the means Our Lord made use of to come to us. She is also the means which we must make use of to go to Him." [969] Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, writing on Mary's role in the Redemption, the Church, and the interior life of the soul, stated: "God has continued to make use of Mary for the sanctification of souls." [970]

"We must choose, therefore, among all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin, the one which draws us more towards death to ourselves, inasmuch as it will be the best and the most sanctifying," concluded St. Louis de Montfort, the apostle of *True Devotion to Jesus through Mary*. "As there are secrets of nature to do in a short time, at little cost and with facility, natural operations, so also in like manner *there are secrets in the order of grace* to do in a short time, with sweetness and facility, supernatural operations, such as emptying ourselves of self, filling ourselves with God, and becoming perfect." [971]

These "secrets in the order of grace" are discovered in devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the synthesis of all devotions "to Jesus through Mary." In a succinct manner, Our Lady herself said the same at Fatima: "My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge, and the path that will lead you to God." Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange explains the reasons for this devotion, "The cult [972] offered to Mary in the Church confirms in a general way the foundations of our faith since it derives from the Redemptive Incarnation. Thereby it destroys heresies: '*Cunctas haereses interemist in universe mundo.*' The same cult leads to holiness by suggesting the imitation of

Mary's virtues, and it glorifies the Son by honoring the Mother." [973]

This devotion is an "interior and perfect practice," as St. Louis de Montfort describes, meaning any external practices are intended for the life of the soul. Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange offers a summation of the saint's teaching on personal consecration to Mary: "Like the other Christian virtues, true devotion grows in us with charity, advancing from the stage of the beginner to that of the more proficient, and continuing up to the stage of the perfect." [974]

In speaking of personal consecration to Our Lady, which St. de Montfort taught is the third degree of Marian devotion, Fr. Lagrange added that it is "a practical form of recognition of her universal mediation and a guarantee of her special protection...In the practice of this complete dependence on Mary, there may be included the resignation into Mary's hands of everything in our good works that is communicable to other souls, so that she may make use of it in accordance with the will of her Divine Son and for His glory." [975]

At every Fatima apparition, the Blessed Virgin asked for the daily Rosary, which is itself is a synthesis of the Redemption history and of prayers taught by Jesus (the *Our Father*), St. Gabriel and, with him, the Church (the *Hail Mary*). Unchanged for centuries, Our Lady herself made one seemingly small but imperative addition with the "O my Jesus prayer." [976] Thus, the Rosary is the foundation of devotion to the Immaculate Heart. We gain through the Rosary that which we spiritually need because, as St. Robert Bellarmine noted, "that which is daily required must be asked for every day." [977] Without prayer, we lose final perseverance, which we cannot merit but only gain by daily *asking* for it as a gift from God.

The Rosary helps us practice the virtues of Jesus and Mary. Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange said of the Psalter: "The fifteen mysteries of the Rosary thus divided into three groups are but different aspects of the three great mysteries of our salvation: The Incarnation, the Redemption, Eternal Life...Thus, the Rosary is a *Credo*...It is the whole of Christian dogma in all its splendor and elevation...The joyful mysteries lead to the Passion, and the Passion to the door of Heaven...The Rosary, well understood is, therefore, a very elevated form of prayer which makes the whole of dogma available to all." [978]

Moreover, the eminent theologian compared the Rosary to the four ends of the Liturgy of the Mass when he wrote, "The Rosary is more than a **prayer of petition**. It is a **prayer of adoration** inspired by the thought of the Incarnate God, a **prayer of reparation** in memory of the Passion of Our

Savior, **a prayer of thanksgiving** that the glorious mysteries continue to reproduce themselves in the uninterrupted entry of the elect into glory.” [\[979\]](#)

Willed by God and revealed by Him, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is intended for these days, which are the latter days. St. Louis de Montfort foresaw that this devotion “**would come to pass particularly at the end of the world**, and indeed presently [as in “soon”] because the Most High with His holy Mother has to form for Himself great saints, who shall surpass most of the other Saints in sanctity...” [\[980\]](#)

To fully eradicate modernism, which is a synthesis of all spiritual evils, the Virgin Mary came to Fatima. There she requested a spiritual solution, a mystery of salvation that overcomes the mystery of iniquity. Willed by God, the offered remedy is a “synthesis of all devotions”—the universal devotion to Mary’s Immaculate Heart.

THE ULTIMATE REASON FOR FATIMA: THE ONE THING NECESSARY

“In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and an era of peace, will be granted to the world.”

—*Our Lady of Fatima, July 13, 1917*

July 13 marks an important date in salvation history. It is the date when, in 1917, Our Lady addressed essential matters of Divine Revelation in a way never before known in the Church’s chronicles. With the third stage of the Great Revolt against God already commencing, the Virgin Mary came to Fatima to remind each person throughout the world of the one thing necessary: *The salvation of our individual souls through devotion to her Immaculate Heart*. That is truly the center of the Great Secret because in June, she had already showed her Heart to the children, saying specifically to Lucia: “*Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.*”

The Promises and the Prophecies:

A Pattern of Three’s

“In the whole cycle of the apparitions, that of July 13 is unquestionably the most important,” wrote Fatima historian Frère Michel. “It is the central apparition which the two previous ones prepared for and the three subsequent ones were to confirm.” [981] He continued, “The history and the content of this extraordinary message is unprecedented in all the history of the Church...” [982] It is also the apparition in which we see **a pattern of three’s**, possibly to implicitly remind us of the Holy Trinity, Who is one God in Three Divine Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Our Lady chose the **third** apparition in July—the month in which the Church especially honors the Most Precious Blood of Jesus shed for our redemption—to disclose **four** matters of import: **1)** a **three-fold** promise for October, including a miracle which, when fulfilled, occurred in **three** stages, **2)** the prophecies of the Great Secret, comprised of **three** distinct parts, **3)** a prayer of sacrifice, with **three** pleas to Jesus, and **4)** an addition after each Rosary decade, a prayer of **three** entreaties to Our Savior.

The Three-fold Promise: “In October, *I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe.*” [983]

The Lady made this promise a mere moment before revealing the Great Secret.

The Miracle, as Frère Michel notes, “would guarantee the divine origin of the secret, as well as the fulfillment of this prophetic secret. Thus the great miracle of October 13 was closely associated, by the Blessed Virgin herself, not only with the whole of her message, but especially with the prophetic text of July 13.” [\[984\]](#)

The Sacrifice Prayer with three intentions: The Lady, who from the beginning of the apparitions displayed consistent concern for sinners, said: “Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say many times, especially whenever you make some sacrifice: ***O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.***” [\[985\]](#) In this brief offering, we recognize *three* points: A prayer addressed to Jesus which speaks of love for Him, offers sacrifice for the souls of others, and makes an act of reparation for sins.

Although this book has previously shared what is known of the Great Secret’s contents, it is efficacious for our souls to read it again, meditate upon Our Lady’s words, and consider why Heaven gave this Great Secret in three distinct parts:

The First Part of the Great Secret: In speaking those last words, Our Lady opened her hands...from which “rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw as it were a sea of fire,” Sr. Lucia wrote. “Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellant likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent, like burning coals. Terrified and as if to plead for succor, we looked up at Our Lady...” [\[986\]](#)

Unexpectedly, the very first part of the Great Secret, given to three young children, was this momentary but soul-searing glimpse of hell. Terrifying as it was, the Vision of Hell was truly one of Heaven’s last recourses of mercy to a world already steeped in sin. This frightening vision further transformed the increasingly holy interior lives of the three Fatima children, who would valiantly fulfill their roles as faithful witnesses and

selfless victims of reparation. The children's unswerving fidelity to the Lady and the entire Message of Fatima, and their great sacrifices for the sake of others, testify to the reality of eternal hell—a reality which Heaven saw fit to reveal to them in the First Part of the Great Secret.

The Second Part of the Great Secret: “If What I Say to You is Done...” Our Lady then gave the Second Secret, “You have seen hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them [poor sinners], God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace.”

“The war [WWI] is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the reign of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.” [\[987\]](#)

“To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated.”

The following sentence which, as far as we now know, concludes the Second Secret, also follows **the pattern of threes**: “In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace [era of peace, in another translation] will be granted to the world.” [\[988\]](#)

The Third Secret begins with the words, “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, *etc.*” [\[989\]](#) All that is currently known is the Third Secret *Vision*, which Lucia described as follows:

“After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’”

“And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it;’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father.’ Other Bishops,

Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.” [\[990\]](#)

While at least a part of the Third Secret *Vision* is now known, the Virgin’s Message relating to it remains yet concealed. Bishop Emeritus Benedict XVI, however, knows *the remaining words* Our Lady spoke in the “Third Secret” of Fatima, for he read them when he was still a Cardinal of the Church.

It shall be mentioned once more that in 1984, after admitting he [Cardinal Ratzinger] had read the Third Secret, he was asked why it was still not released. His response revealed that the Third Secret possesses the following “six themes” (mysteriously correlating with the same number of times Our Lady appeared at Fatima): **1)** It is in accord with Divine Revelation, **2)** It demands a radical call to conversion and penance, **3)** It refers to the absolute importance of history, **4)** It alerts the Church and the world to the dangers threatening the faith, the life of the Christian and therefore the world, **5)** It is integral to the importance of the last times, and **6)** Although it could be mistaken for sensationalism, it is nevertheless a religious prophesy corresponding to Scripture and confirmed by many other Marian apparitions.

And so it is asked again: Could these six themes of the Third Secret direct our attention to one or more of the “six signs’ [\[991\]](#) of the last times, given by Christ Himself? They, too, fall within the realm of “the absolute importance of history,” for salvation history centers on two things: The Incarnation of Christ, when Our Lord came to offer Redemption and Mercy, and His Second Coming, when He will come as Just Judge.

The Rosary Decade Prayer, with three intentions: To return to the sequence of events during the July apparition, Our Lady said, “When you

pray the Rosary, say after each mystery: ***O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those with the greatest need of Thy Mercy.***” [\[992\]](#)

Of the latter part of this prayer—“especially those with the greatest need of Thy Mercy”—Sr. Lucia would years later humbly explain “that Our Lady was referring to the souls in the greatest danger of damnation.” [\[993\]](#)

In October, the Lady kept all three of her promises. With her first sentence, she revealed two of three things she wanted, as well as her title: “I want to tell you that a chapel is to be built here in My honor, for I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue always to pray the Rosary every day.” [\[994\]](#)

Those unadorned words verify the Virgin’s statement in June that her Immaculate Heart leads us to God—for every Catholic chapel contains the Hidden Presence of Jesus. By praying the Rosary every day, we cultivate the practice of prayer and meditation on the lives of Christ and His Virgin Mother, we gain all 15 promises Our Lady gave to those faithful to her Rosary, we grow further confident in Jesus and Mary, and we may gain a daily plenary indulgence (under the proper conditions).

The final desire of Our Lady of the Rosary—given just before opening her hands to initiate the Great Miracle of the Sun—was made known in the form of a most solemn and grieved command: “People must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. They must not offend Our Lord any more, for He is already too much offended.” [\[995\]](#)

A Mystical Doctrine

“Fatima is indeed a mystical doctrine or, so to speak, a devotion completely centered on the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the consecration and reparation due it. It is also the fully traditional conception of religion and theology, completely oriented toward the last ends without any compromise with the world, or the idle dreams of Christian progressivism...it is a politics of Christendom which invites the Church to stand up resolutely to the gravest peril of the hour...” [\[996\]](#) The whole Message of Fatima, including the Great Secret and the Great Miracle of the Sun, plumbs oceanic depths of the Faith which this little work can merely outline:

- The Lady’s gentle but insistent command to the Pope to consecrate Russia, in union with the world’s bishops, to her Immaculate Heart is intended to save the Church’s human element, convert sinners, and remind the Vicar of the dignity, the authority, and the duties of his high office. As reigning Steward of the Catholic City, the Pope’s role, which safeguards the

Deposit of Faith, is intended for the salvation of souls.

- The Virgin Mother of God also wishes the Vicar of Christ to universally promulgate the Five First Saturdays of Reparation for the blasphemies made against her Most Amiable Heart. With her specific requests to the Pope, Our Lady desires that the Vicar of her Divine Son's Church recalls his solemn obligation to preserve the Faith, whole and intact, in "restoring all things in Christ." [997] As Steward, he is guardian of the Church. As such, it is the Pope's honor and duty to obey the Queen of the Catholic City, just as He must obey the King, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The Virgin's insistence that the bishops must join the Holy Father in the Collegial Consecration reminds the princes of the Church that their offices, while elevated, remain subordinate to the Holy Father; they, too, must obey his lawful commands. With the Pope—whose responsibility is even greater than theirs—they are accountable to God for the souls placed under their care.

- The Blessed Mother stated succinctly, "God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart"—a devotion to the Mediatrix of all Graces, the final recourse to save "poor sinners" from hell. Decades have passed since the Virgin Mary uttered those words, and still we do not see this devotion universally practiced, much less promulgated by the Church's pastors.

While we cannot be certain which will come first—the Collegial Consecration of Russia or the worldwide devotion to Our Lady's Heart—we do know that we should follow Our Lady's five requests for all of the faithful, addressed to each and every one of us, from the Pope in Rome to the least of God's little ones.

Finally, we should also remember that the five things of which the Lady of the Rosary asked of us are as straightforward as they are profound. Intended to sanctify us and keep us on the path of ongoing conversion (the secret of the interior life), these five practices must be well-memorized, shared with others and, above all, practiced. They are as follows: **1)** The daily Rosary, **2)** Faithful accomplishment of daily duty (as Catholics and also in our states in life), **3)** Sacrifices for the conversion of sinners, **4)** The wearing of the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, and **5)** Our practice of devotion via the Five First Saturdays of Reparation.

In heeding these five requests of the Mother of God, we shall deepen devotion to the Immaculate Heart in our own lives and that of our families,

hopefully make further steps in the three conversions of the interior life, assist God (Who usually acts through people) in the conversion of our fellow sinners, and attain salvation.

The “Business” of Salvation

In its entirety, then, the Fatima Message is given for the sake of all who must battle for their souls in the most dangerous of times—the age of the great apostasy. The Message, Miracle and Secret rest on a central theme of salvation in three parts. “First is the salvation of souls; second is the salvation of the nations and of Christendom, the peace of the world; and third is the preservation of the Catholic Faith and the salvation of the Church.” [\[998\]](#)

“Truly, it is the greatest of errors to neglect the business of eternal salvation,” said St. Eucherius, a truth upon which St. Alphonsus de Liguori further elaborated by saying “it is an error that exceeds all others, for to lose the soul is a mistake without a remedy.” [\[999\]](#)

“One thing is necessary,” wrote St. Alphonsus as he emphatically quoted the *Gospel of St. Luke*, “the salvation of our souls...For this God has placed us here: not to acquire honors, riches, or pleasures, but to acquire by our good works the eternal kingdom that is prepared for those who, during this present life, fight against and overcome the enemies of their eternal salvation.” [\[1000\]](#)

With this truth in mind, as we pray and sacrifice for the triumph of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, may we always keep confidence in the Virgin’s words at Fatima: “Don’t lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge, and the path that will lead you to God.” [\[1001\]](#)

FIVE SIMPLE STEPS TO SANCTITY

“The world must conform to Our Lord, not He to it.”

–*Fr Denis Fahey*

“We must pray a great deal and beg God not to chastise us and **save us in time and for eternity**,” Sr. Lucia once urged in carefully guarded yet revealing terms, as she spoke about the third part of Fatima’s Great Secret. [1002] Compare those words of the Servant of God to the novel and empty mottos of our own times. In response to the senseless rhetoric and in hopes of restoring the social order of Christ the King, Catholics of good will are asking their fellows to make some changes of their own. Whatever changes must be made, however, must be in accord with God’s Will. In fact, it is past time for a universal epiphany amongst all true Catholics: In our homes, parishes, and Catholic apostolates, our common cause must be the public and solemn Collegial Consecration of Russia and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Right and just is the recent clarion call from Catholics asking other members of the Mystical Body of Christ to work together to “restore all things in Christ” [1003] for the eternal Church, upholding the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, maintains: “Each one is under obligation to show forth his faith, either to instruct and encourage others of the faithful, or to repel the attacks of unbelievers.” [1004] As the Angelic Doctor also explained, “In all ages, men have been divinely instructed in matters expedient for the salvation of the elect...and in all ages there have been persons possessed of the spirit of prophesy, not for the purpose of announcing new doctrines, but to direct human actions.” [1005] Such was the purpose of the Fatima revelations.

The Five Point Defense of the Catholic City

In praying and working for the Restoration of the Social Reign of Christ the King, all our actions as the Church Militant should be placed under the supreme battle plan given by Our Lady of Fatima, She who “cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array.” [1006] Her battle plan is intended for each one of us, on an individual basis as a beloved child of God, a dutiful citizen of the Catholic City, and a stalwart soldier of Christ.

As children of God, we should approach Our Lord and Our Lady as little

ones approach their parents on earth, full of love, confidence and hope.

As citizens of the Catholic City, we follow the Royal Road because it was first trod by Christ the King and His Virgin Mother, for as Our Lord taught, **“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”** [\[1007\]](#)

As soldiers of Christ, our best defense is a good offense. The victorious “peaceful battle strategy” to “save us in time and for eternity,” as Sr. Lucia phrased it, has been given to every single member of the Church Militant at Fatima by Our Mother and Mediatrix, Conqueror of Heresies. So important are they that once more shall they be repeated:

- 1) The daily Rosary,
- 2) Faithful accomplishment of daily duty (as Catholics and in our states in life),
- 3) sacrifice for the conversion of sinners,
- 4) The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel,
- 5) The Five First Saturdays of Reparation.

Specific to the Pope, Steward of the Catholic City, Our Lady requested the Consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart in union with all the bishops of the world.

May God Save Us in Time and in Eternity

Lest we think the term “peaceful battle” an oxymoron, let us also recall the Church’s counsel as explained by Pope Pius XI, “Certainly there is the greatest need now of such **valiant soldiers of Christ** who will work with all their strength to keep the human family safe from the dire ruin into which it would be plunged were the teachings of the *Gospel* to be flouted, and that order of things permitted to prevail which tramples underfoot no less the laws of nature than those of God. The Church of Christ, built upon an unshakable rock, has nothing to fear for herself, as she knows for a certainty that the gates of hell shall never prevail against her...”

“Venerable Brethren and Beloved Sons, let us not permit the children of this world to appear wiser in their generation than we who by the Divine Goodness are the children of the light. We find them, indeed, selecting and training with the greatest shrewdness alert and resolute devotees who spread their errors ever wider day by day through all classes of men and in every part of the world. And whenever they undertake to attack the Church of Christ more violently, We see them put aside their internal quarrels,

assembling in fully harmony in a single battle line with a completely united effort, and work to achieve their common purpose.”

“Surely there is not one that does not know how many and how great are the works that the tireless zeal of Catholics is striving everywhere to carry out, both for social and economic welfare as well as in the fields of education and religion. **But this admirable and unremitting activity not infrequently shows less effectiveness because of the dispersion of its energies in too many different directions. Therefore, let all men of good will stand united, all who under the Shepherds of the Church wish to fight this good and peaceful battle of Christ; and under the leadership and teaching guidance of the Church let all strive according to the talent, powers, and position of each to contribute something to the Christian reconstruction of human society ...seeking not themselves and their own interests, but those of Jesus Christ, not trying to press at all costs their own counsels, but ready to sacrifice them, however excellent, if the greater common good should seem to require it, so that in all and above all Christ may reign, Christ may command to Whom be ‘honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.’”** [\[1008\]](#)

In heeding the Fatima Virgin’s gentle commands, we can do more than imitate “the children of this world” who “put aside their internal quarrels, assembling in fully harmony in a single battle line with a completely united effort, and work to achieve their common purpose.” In our own private lives, in our homes, and in our various Catholic apostolates, we are already united because we are members of the Mystical Body of Christ. For what other common purpose should we spiritually join forces other than to accomplish what Our Lady of Fatima asked, by praying the daily Rosary and sacrificing for the conversion of sinners, and asking always for the collegial consecration of Russia to the one and only Immaculate Heart?

Our Lady and Catholic Action

We can take other important *Catholic* steps, from homeschooling our children to participating in various volunteer efforts, subscribing to tried-and-true traditional Catholic papers, and much more. At the same time, we must realize that these worthy efforts, which can save individuals and perhaps whole families for eternity, will not bring forth *worldwide* conversion—which in turn will save hundreds of millions of souls. Our actions alone can neither destroy modernism (the synthesis of all heresies), nor effect the conversion of Russia nor grant an era of peace to mankind. Those are miracles reserved by

God for Our Lady, who revealed at Fatima that only she can help us and who also said at Akita, “Those who place their confidence in me will be saved.”

“But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you,” [\[1009\]](#) as Christ Our Lord taught. “My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the path that will lead you to God,” said Our Lady at Fatima. These words of Christ and His Virgin Mother complement each other, for as St. Bernadine of Siena explained, “Every grace that is communicated to this world has a threefold course. For by excellent order, it is dispensed from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, from the Virgin to us.”

The Virgin and a Mystery of the Holy Trinity

The Rosary is the storehouse of blessings, wrote Blessed Alan de La Roche. Today, as Sr. Lucia revealed “... the Most Holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary... There is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary. With the Holy Rosary, we will **save** ourselves. We will **sanctify** ourselves. We will **console** Our Lord and **obtain the salvation** of many souls.” [\[1010\]](#)

In the following excerpts from Sr. Lucia’s private letters, [\[1011\]](#) we may gain beautiful insights about the Rosary:

“Our Lady requested and recommended that the Rosary be prayed every day, having repeated this [request] in all the Apparitions, as if forewarning us that in these times of *diabolical disorientation*, we must not let ourselves be deceived by false doctrines that diminish the elevation of our soul to God by means of prayer.”

“For certain, it is not necessary that during the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that one pray the Holy Rosary, [for] besides time set aside for the Holy Mass, we must also put aside time for praying the Holy Rosary. We can and should take part in the one without forsaking the other.”

“The Rosary is, for the majority of souls who live in the world, their daily spiritual bread; and to deprive them or draw them away from this prayer is to decrease in their minds the appreciation and good faith with which they pray...”

“All the prayers that we say in the Rosary are prayers that form part of the Sacred Liturgy. More than a prayer directed to Our Lady, it is a prayer directed to God:

- “The *Our Father* was taught to us by Jesus Christ, Who said, ‘Pray

thus, *Our Father Who art in heaven...’ ”*

- “*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost* is the hymn sung by the Angels who were sent by God to announce the birth of His Word, God-made Man.”

- “The *Hail Mary*, when well understood, is nothing less than a prayer directed to God: ‘*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee.*’ I hail Thee, Mary, because the Lord is with Thee! These words were most certainly dictated by the Father in heaven to the Angel when He sent him to earth, in order that with these words he (the angel) should greet Mary.”

“So this salutation [Hail Mary] is an act of praise addressed to God: Blessed art Thou amongst women because Blessed (sic) is the fruit of Thy womb; and because Thou are the Mother of God-made Man. In Thee, we adore God as in **the first Tabernacle** in which the Father enclosed His Word; as on **the first Altar**, Thy lap; as in **the first Monstrance**, Thy arms, before which the Angels, shepherds and kings knelt to adore the Son of God made Man!”

Sr. Lucia also alluded to a mystery of the Holy Trinity, as well as a mystery of Our Lady’s earthly life and her life in heaven when she wrote, “Since Thou art a Tabernacle, a Monstrance, a living Temple, permanent home of the Holy Trinity, Mother of God and Our Mother—‘*pray for us poor sinners, now and at the hour of our death.*’ ”

Although previously mentioned in this book, it bears repeating, for what a breathtaking contemplation it is to always keep in mind, especially as we pray the Rosary—in Heaven and in eternity, **Our Lady is the Perpetual Tabernacle of the Holy Trinity!** Volumes might be written about this Mariophany but, for now, let it suffice to ask ourselves: Is it any wonder that to save us “in these last days” that the Rosary, which is an act of praise to God, is given a new efficacy? Or that Our Lady asked us to pray it every day? Or that Jesus wills Russia’s consecration to His Mother’s Immaculate Heart, so that one day the whole world will honor her Heart next to His own Sacred Heart?

After the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Rosary is the most highly indulgenced prayer of the Church, which grants a plenary indulgence (the complete remission of temporal punishments of confessed sins) *every day of the year* to those who pray the Rosary in a church, oratory, or with members of the family, in a religious Community, or in a pious association. [\[1012\]](#)

“Therefore, it is necessary to pray the Rosary in cities, in towns and in

villages, in the streets, on the road, while traveling or at home, in churches and in chapels!” wrote Sr. Lucia. “It is a prayer that is accessible to all and everyone can and should pray. There are many who do not attend the liturgical prayer of the Holy Mass on a daily basis. If they do not pray the Rosary, what praying do they accomplish? And without prayer, who can be saved? *‘Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.’* ”

“It is necessary, then, to pray and pray always,” Sr. Lucia concluded. “This means that all our activities and labors should be accompanied by a great spirit of prayer. It is in prayer that the soul meets God. In this meeting, grace and strength are received, even when one’s prayers are accompanied by distractions. Prayer always brings an increase of Faith to souls, even if it be no more than a momentary remembrance of the Mysteries of our Redemption –recalling the Birth, Death and Resurrection of Our Savior; and God will dismiss and pardon those distractions attributed to human weakness, ignorance and littleness.”

“That Thy Kingdom come, let the reign of Mary come,” wrote St. Louis Marie de Montfort. The reign of Mary is the reign of Christ, the same era of peace promised by Our Lady of Fatima. It was to save us “in time and for eternity” that the Mother of God came to Fatima, giving God’s five-point “peaceful battle plan” to all of the Church’s children, while appointing a special task to the Vicar of the Church and the bishops.

It is a sanctifying strategy we can share with others as we ourselves live it, always making our foremost intention the Collegial Consecration of Russia to the Virgin’s Immaculate Heart. By these means we can follow the sound spiritual advice of Sr. Lucia, confidante of Heaven: “It is necessary for each one of us to begin to reform himself spiritually. Each person must not only save his own soul but also help to save all the souls that God has placed on our path.”

WHY DAILY DUTY SANCTIFIES US

“Our Lord does not care so much for the importance of our works, as for the love with which they are done.”

–*St. Teresa of Avila*

Daily duty, prayer and sacrifice, and the interior life—what do these things really mean? God, Who knows all things, knew that the Modern Age would be one of increased sin and danger. Having already given us the means to sanctity, He gave a new efficacy to “simple things,” like the Rosary. Through the Fatima revelations, which are in perfect accord with Divine Revelation, Our Lord also made it known that the sacrifice He now requires of each one of us is the faithful accomplishment of daily duty. The means are prayer and sacrifice, by which the interior life may become perfect in God, because “in divine things the most simple...are also the loftiest and the most profound.”[\[1013\]](#)

Like Tradition and Scripture, prayer and sacrifice are inseparable to the spiritual life of the soul. The Rosary is the prayer Our Lady asked us to offer every day. It is a great spiritual help to know a few more reasons *why* we should pray the daily Rosary.

At Fatima, Our Lady often responded to the people’s supplications, saying it was necessary for them to pray the daily Rosary in order to obtain these graces *throughout the year*.[\[1014\]](#) At other times, She said the request would be granted *within the year if the Rosary was prayed every day*. As in all things, the Virgin’s response is for God’s glory and the salvation of souls.

To pray the Rosary, every day for a year, is to **practice perseverance in prayer**. Our Lord said, “All things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” [\[1015\]](#) The daily Rosary gives us greater faith, hope and charity. It increases our belief, our adoration, our trust, our confidence and our love for God and His Virgin Mother. It multiplies sanctifying grace and helps us avoid mortal sin—even venial sin. The [15 Rosary Promises](#), given centuries ago to Blessed Alan de la Roche, are intended to lead us to her Divine Son. And so we begin to understand why, at every Fatima apparition, Our Lady asked for the daily Rosary.

With the Rosary there is **daily duty**, which Our Lord called “**the true penance**” He now requires. Daily duty has always been the obligation of the faithful Catholic; it is the normal path to sanctification. As Sr. Lucia wrote concerning what Jesus said in this regard, “He wishes that it be made clear to

souls that the true penance He wants and requires consists first of all in the sacrifice that each one must make to fulfill his own religious and temporal duties.” [\[1016\]](#)

What is Daily Duty?

It means faithfully fulfilling our obligations to God and in our states in life with supernatural charity, the virtue summed up by Christ Himself: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.” [\[1017\]](#)

How we accomplish daily duty is the secret of the interior life, which is also called “the life of the elect” or “the spiritual life.” The interior life is defined as “the state of activity of a soul which strives against its natural inclinations in order to regulate them, and endeavors to acquire the habit of judging and directing in movements in all things according to the light of the *Gospel* and the example of Our Lord.” [\[1018\]](#)

When we offer our every thought, word and action of the day to Jesus through Mary, our souls gain spiritual merit. “The chief fruit of sanctifying grace is merit—a claim or right to receive an increase of sanctifying grace, together with a claim to a corresponding measure of glory and happiness in heaven,” the Baltimore Catechism explains. “We can increase in heavenly merit indefinitely. Not only works which are by their nature good, such as prayer and the reception of the sacraments and attendance at Mass, but **even the ordinary works of our day**, such as the taking of our meals, study, our games and amusements, can become meritorious if we perform them under the proper conditions. These conditions are very easy—we must be in the state of grace and offer our works to God out of love for Him. We do not have to make this offering with each work we perform. It is sufficient to make it from time to time, particularly every morning...” [\[1019\]](#)

It was for this reason that Sr. Lucia, the last Fatima visionary (whose cause for canonization has been opened), assisted in composing what is known as the Fatima Morning Offering. As soon as we awaken, we may give our thoughts to God and consecrate the day to Him by praying the Morning Offering:

O my God, in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary (here kiss the Brown Scapular [\[1020\]](#)), I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul

and Divinity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, joining with it my every thought, word and action of this day.

O my Jesus, I desire today to gain every indulgence and merit I can, and I offer them, together with myself, to Mary Immaculate, that she may best apply them to the interests of Thy Most Sacred Heart. Precious Blood of Jesus, save us! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. Amen.

This particular offering means we give everything to God, “to Jesus through Mary.” It is the shorter way of spiritual perfection, as taught by St. Louis de Montfort, an interior life of simplicity. “In divine things,” wrote the eminent theologian, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P, “simplicity is united to depth and elevation, for divine things that are highest in God and deepest in our hearts are simplicity itself.” [\[1021\]](#)

“**Do your duty and all will go well**” was a favorite saying of Pope St. Pius X, by which he meant all will go well with the life of the soul. Daily duty, justly accomplished when we cooperate with grace, leads to infused contemplation, but only if there is “progress in the acquired virtues, the infused virtues, and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost in interior souls truly detached from themselves and almost continually united to God.” [\[1022\]](#) To accomplish daily duty means practice of all the virtues to a heroic degree. Such is the path to sanctity.

Pitfalls on the Path

Daily duty accomplished with love, but “dying to self,” is not an easy process. Although “the charity of God presseth us” [\[1023\]](#) to return His love, there is good reason that the Scriptures warn we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling. [\[1024\]](#) A holy fear of the Lord means we love Him and do not want to offend Him, just because we love Him. We should always fear ourselves because, due to the effects of Original Sin, we bear four wounds –**ignorance, weakness, malice** and **disordered desire**. These four wounds are the causes of our faults, which we so carefully hide from ourselves, but they are overcome when we use God’s graces well. That is why Our Lord made it clear that our daily duty should be offered up in *true penance*.

Due to our spiritual weaknesses, we are easily swayed into thinking we have pleased God, especially when we fulfill our religious obligations. We must guard against outward shows of piety (to garner attention for ourselves) while simultaneously fearing to do as we ought (because we are afraid of what others may think of us). Nor should we revel in spiritual consolations,

for two reasons: They do not signify sanctity and they are fleeting. In fact, God eventually withdraws such consolations to help us overcome pride and whatever else may be our predominant fault.

Pride, the root of all sin, **is very cunning**, because it hides itself under the guise of virtue. Although we are in a state of grace, we are not “safe” from the seven deadly sins; indeed, the devil works against us even more so. His ultimate aim is to find our weak spots, blind us to our faults, retard our progress, or cause us to fall so many times that we are tempted to despair. Interior troubles often begin with temptations to pride.

Both the Old and New Testaments provide copious examples of pride, the particular danger to the faithful. For example, we recall St. Peter’s over-confidence that he would never abandon Christ. Yet only hours after receiving the very first Holy Communion, he and all of the Apostles fled from Christ’s persecutors. Then the first Vicar of Christ publicly denied the Lord three times. For this great fault, St. Peter wept and sincerely repented for the rest of his life. This one, painful failure was a great lesson to him and to all the Church’s members throughout time: We can never be sure of ourselves, only of God and those with Him in Heaven.

Even after the Resurrection and Ascension, the Apostles’ faith remained weak until the Descent of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost brought to them the second interior conversion, with the result that St. Peter fearlessly and publicly proclaimed Christ. Although greatly persecuted, they never again denied Our Lord. Despite this fidelity, human respect was the cause of St. Peter’s second great public sin.

His first public offense was against God; his second was against his neighbor. The second wrong-doing seemed a very small matter at the time, but it displayed a serious hidden fault. St. Peter caused a great scandal to the faithful when he would not sit with the Gentile converts (who were not circumcised) for fear of the Jewish converts (who were circumcised). [\[1025\]](#) St. Peter, who thought it prudent to momentarily avoid the Gentiles, committed an act of cowardice, which **artfully disguises itself** as the virtue of prudence.

On the path of sanctity, our predominant fault is overcome if and when we truly love God above *everything* else. As trustworthy spiritual advisors like Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange point out, we (like St. Peter) usually learn of our hidden faults by trials, sufferings and humiliations. On the other hand, not all trials are due to our sins, for some are meant to perfect us while others allow

us to practice greater charity in reparation for the sins of others.

Charity, the queen of virtues, is the reason why daily duty can be offered to God as “true penance.” When we submit to all that God allows or wills in our lives, thinking only of Him in our joys and sufferings, we imitate Christ, Who loved us enough to live—and die—for us.

“Pick Up Your Cross Daily and Follow Me”

The sacrifice of daily duty, then, is our cross. The Cross is “all that goes against self. All that it costs to subdue self—to act on principle, submit to authority, to follow common life, to accommodate ourselves to others, to bear correction, to be faithful to irksome duties, to be submissive and humble during sickness, to struggle against self-indulgence and the softness of our times, preserving attention to the rules of modesty, to be energetic in attention to our weak point, to bear up against failure and monotony of daily routine, to be resigned when all seems to go wrong, whatever is contrary to our liking in circumstances, our health, the way things are done, the way things turn out—all that is our cross.” The truth is that “true holiness does not consist in *not* feeling the Cross, but in *bearing the pain* with true conformity to God’s will.” [\[1026\]](#)

“*Whatever you do, think not of yourself, but of God.*” (St. Vincent of Ferrer)

WHY SATURDAY IS OUR LADY'S DAY

“In danger, in anguish, in uncertainty, think of Mary, call on Mary. May she never be far from your lips, from your heart; and thus you will be able to obtain the help of her prayer, never forget the example of her life. If you follow her, you cannot go astray; if you pray to her, you cannot despair; if you think of her, you cannot be mistaken. If she sustains you, you cannot fall; if she protects you, you have nothing to fear; if she guides you, do not tire; if she is propitious to you, you will reach the goal ...”

–*St. Bernard of Clairvaux,*

Hom. II super "Missus est," 17: PL 183, 70-71

Some may wonder why the Virgin Mary specifically chose Saturday as a day of reparation. Why Saturday and not another day, other than the Lord's day?

“To you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God,” [\[1027\]](#) Our Lord revealed to His Apostles, but how much more do His words apply to Our Lady, whose singular office surpasses that of the disciples. Theologians are accustomed to point out that when God calls a human being to any office, He gives that person all the graces needed to fulfill its obligations. [\[1028\]](#) Naturally, that teaching applies to Our Lady and never was it truer than on the first Holy Saturday, when the grieving Blessed Mother alone remained constant in faith. [\[1029\]](#) It is for this reason that **Saturday, especially Holy Saturday, is considered by the Church as Our Lady's Day.**

When the Jewish Sabbath began at sunset on Good Friday and all through Saturday, Our Lady and Jesus' disciples, including the Holy Women, were prostrate with sorrow. Amongst all of them, only the Virgin Mary fully understood her Son's promise of His Resurrection, keeping its unwavering hope in her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart.

Think of all that must have transpired in the Heart and Soul of the Virgin Mother as she remembered those most dreadful hours of her Son's Passion. The mere thought of a beloved child, enduring such suffering and abuse, would bring to the heart of any other human mother deep pangs of grief. Imagine the sorrow of the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God! How much Our Lady endured—for us!

Throughout the Sabbath, the Blessed Mother recalled the betrayal, saw again the most grievous Passion, and once more heard the contemptuous

words that insulted and blasphemed Our Lord. Tortured and ridiculed from all sides, Jesus was never given a moment's peace from the second that His Passion began. *God is not mocked*, [1030] but He allowed Himself to be mocked as a prophet who said that He could raise the destroyed temple in three days, mocked in His quality of Son of God, mocked as a miracle-worker who healed others but could not help Himself, mocked for His sanctity and confidence in God, mocked as the Messiah and mocked as the King of the Jews.[1031]

Loving and grieving witnesses of the Passion, Our Lady and the few who had been with her at the Foot of the Cross must have later told the other Apostles of Our Lord's last words:

His First Plea to God the Father: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [1032]

To the Good Thief: "Amen, I say to thee: This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." [1033]

To His Virgin Mother and St. John: "Woman, behold thy son... son, behold thy Mother." [1034]

A Second Cry to God the Father: "*Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?* That is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [1035]

Through parched lips: "I thirst." [1036]

For all to hear: "It is consummated." [1037]

A Third Prayer to God the Father: "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* And saying this, he gave up the ghost." [1038]

As if it was not enough to remember Jesus' cruel sufferings during His Passion and at His Death, they saw again Our Lord's side not only pierced but opened wide by a lance, His Sacred Heart laid bare and gushing forth blood and water. For Our Lady, witnessing this last and vicious sacrilege of her beloved Son's Body, Simeon's prophecy came to pass: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce that, out of many hearts, thoughts shall be revealed.* [1039]

Ancilla Domini

(Handmaiden of the Lord)

In those after-hours, the Virgin Mary would repeatedly behold in her memory Jesus' Sacred Body removed from the Cross and the withdrawing of the cruel nails and the Crown of Thorns, feeling again His Holy Form, torn to shreds, and lying limp in her arms. Transfixed by the uttermost sorrow, Our Lady was silent in her anguish, but how the others must have wept at the

sight of His beautiful and Holy Face, now so pale and disfigured. Relived once more was the rushed, distressing burial in a freshly-hewn and donated tomb.

Above the deep heartache of the faithful St. John and St. Mary Magdalene, the Apostles and the Holy Women, Our Lady's immaculate soul was crucified when her Son was crucified, which is why the Immaculate Heart is also the Sorrowful Heart of the Virgin Mother.

It was during the Passion that the Lady, full of grace, rose to the supreme and most terrible Sacrifice. Her prayer then consisted of the same words she spoke to the Angel Gabriel thirty-four years before: *Ecce Ancilla Domini* –that is, “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord*; be it done to me according to Thy word.” [1040] During the terrible Passion and Death of her Divine Son, the overflowing graces and virtues of this humble Maiden never allowed her to even once doubt what the Angel said to her long ago: *The Lord will give Him the throne of David His father, and He shall be King over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.* [1041]

City of God:

The Glories and Sorrows of Mary

“I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and virtue.” [1042] In explaining these words from the Old Testament, St. Alphonsus taught, “As the Blessed Virgin is the mother of holy love and hope, so also is she the mother of faith.” [1043]

“Hope takes its rise in faith,” the saint continued, “for God enlightens by faith to know His goodness and the promises He had made, that by this knowledge we may rise by hope to the desire of possessing Him. Mary, then, having had the virtue of faith in its highest degree, had also hope in the same degree of excellence, and this made her say with David, *But it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God.*” [1044]

In all of the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious events of her life, Our Lady “stood alone, in a position apart, in her relation to the Redeemer and to His work of Redemption.” [1045] As St. Alphonsus also taught, “the most holy Virgin had more faith than all men and angels. She saw her Son in the crib of Bethlehem, and believed Him the Creator of the world. She saw him fly from Herod, and yet believed Him the King of Kings. She saw him born and believed Him eternal. She saw Him poor and in need of food, and believed Him the Lord of the universe. She saw Him lying on straw, and believed Him

omnipotent. She observed that He did not speak, and She believed Him infinite Wisdom. She heard Him weep, and believed Him the joy of Paradise. In fine, she saw Him in death, despised and crucified and, although faith wavered in others, Mary remained firm in the belief that He was God.”

[\[1046\]](#)

It may seem that such things were effortless for the Blessed Mother because she is the Immaculate One. It is true that she was full of grace from the very first moment of her existence, but it was through her continual efforts and merits that grace overflowed in her soul—making her the aqueduct of grace for all souls. *In me is all grace...*

“Among the many beautiful qualities attributed by the Holy Ghost to the Blessed Virgin Mary, one stands out preeminently,” wrote St. John Eudes. “It is contained in these words of the eighty-sixth Psalm, which Holy Church and her Doctors apply to the Mother of God, ‘*Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God.*’” [\[1047\]](#)

“**Mary is indeed the great and glorious city of God**, the holy city, the city of Jerusalem, the city of peace, the royal city, ‘the city of the Great King.’ [\[1048\]](#) The King of Kings built this city with His own hands; He exempted her entirely from the infamous tribute of sin; He honored her with countless great and extraordinary privileges; He enriched her with inestimable gifts and treasures and He established His first and most glorious abode within her heart...Thou are not only the city of the great King, O Incomparable Virgin, thou art also His royal and eternal palace...Now if Mary is the palace of the King of Kings, her Heart must be the King’s imperial throne.” [\[1049\]](#)

The Virgin always cooperated with her Spouse for “in Mary is the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; plenitude of all the interior gifts; plenitude of the gifts of Wisdom and Understanding, plenitude of the gifts of Counsel and Knowledge, plenitude of the gifts of Piety and Fortitude, and of the Fear of the Lord; plenitude of all the exterior gifts, the gifts of miracles, healing, prophecy, and of tongues.” [\[1050\]](#)

St. John Eudes also testified, “St. Bernadine of Siena expressly stated that Our Lady...knew all these things in God, as in their first and universal cause...*She saw God in all things, and all things in God.*” [\[1051\]](#) This is the great gift of grace that, when cooperated with, creates great saints; and it was this great grace which mainly sustained the Virgin Mary in all the mystical and mysterious events of her life, especially during the Lord’s Way of the

Cross and His Crucifixion.

Five Means and Mysteries of the City of God

In the Good Friday Passion and during the desolate hours in which Our Lord laid in the tomb, the faithful Virgin Mother—like her Divine Son, throughout His Life and Death—did not abandon even one of **the five means of salvation and sanctification**, in order to be the holiest of models for us to follow. St. Louis Marie de Montfort reminds us that these five means are known to all and that “they are laid down in the *Gospel*, explained by the masters of the spiritual life, practiced by the saints, and necessary to all who wish to be saved and to attain perfection. They are: **humility of heart, continual prayer, mortification in all things, abandonment to Divine Providence, and conformity to the Will of God.**” [\[1052\]](#)

Conceived Immaculate and always full of grace, still Our Lady carefully guarded the gifts bestowed on her by the Holy Trinity. St. John Eudes affirmed that “the Holy Virgin’s heart exercised perpetual vigilance over her own thoughts, words, and actions, over her passions and inclinations, over all her interior and exterior senses, and over all the powers of her soul, that she might drive far away from herself anything that could possibly displease God and to use her faculties as perfectly and as virtuously as possible.” [\[1053\]](#) In her Immaculate Heart, she pondered many things, and it was her Immaculate Heart, the highest faculty of her soul, that was pierced by a mystical sword of sorrow.

Since all the glories of Mary are for the sake of her Divine Son, as John Cardinal Newman once said in a sermon, [\[1054\]](#) the same can be said of her sorrows. “She had lived of her Son’s life, and when He died on the Cross, she died with Him,” a holy abbot once said. [\[1055\]](#) “Both Mother and Son were nailed to the Cross, the Son in the Body, the Mother in her Heart,” exclaims St. Lawrence Justinian. [\[1056\]](#) “Could not Mary die in her Heart, as Jesus died in His Body?” St Bernard asked. [\[1057\]](#)

Nevertheless, the Virgin did not perish with her beloved Son, but it was “only by a miraculous interposition on the part of God that she did not die.” [\[1058\]](#) Her mission on earth was not yet fully accomplished, for the Passion and Death of Our Lord was the means by which Christ offered us Redemption and by which, in the order of grace, Our Lady became Our Mother.

Virgin Most Faithful

When Our Lady retired on Good Friday night, the evening of the Jewish Sabbath, she did so to occupy herself solely with the thought of her Divine Son. “Having cooperated in the Incarnation of the Son of God by the ardor of her love, the fervor of her desires, and the power of her prayers, **Mary’s Heart also contributed to His Resurrection...**” [\[1059\]](#)

As the Queen of Martyrs, Our Lady followed her Son and stood at the Cross, her love and humility far overshadowing the public shame of being Mother to the One crucified as the lowest of criminals. As Queen of Prophets, the Blessed Mother stood apart from all others for only she foresaw and kept hope in the Resurrection throughout the Sabbath. It was to the gracious Virgin Mary that the Apostles and the Holy Women turned to on the Sabbath, flying to the Mother of Mercy, Mother of God and Mother of the Church.

Holy Tradition relates that Christ, having risen from dead about 3 a.m. on Easter Sunday morning, first appeared to His Virgin Mother. Scripture supports that tradition, for Our Lady was not with the Holy Women who went to Christ’s tomb later on the same morning. **Why was it that the faithful Mother**—who stood at the Foot of the Cross, held her deceased Son in her arms, and hurriedly prepared Him for burial before the Sabbath began—**did not return to Jesus’ sepulcher** to properly anoint His Body, according to the Jewish custom? It was because not only had she anticipated His Resurrection, but she *knew* He had risen.

Just as the Virgin preceded her Divine Son in historical time, so does “**Lady’s Day**” (Saturday) precede **the Lord’s Day** (Sunday). St. Thomas Aquinas explains: “Since the Resurrection took place on a Sunday, we keep holy this day instead of the Sabbath as did the Jews of old. However, we also sanctify Saturday in honor of the glorious Virgin Mary who remained unshaken in faith all day Saturday after the death of her Divine Son.” [\[1060\]](#)

Not only on Holy Saturday but on each Saturday of the year, faithful Catholics might also recall these words of St. Bernard’s: “In Mary alone did the faith of the Church remain steadfast during the three days that Jesus lay in the tomb. And although everyone else wavered, she who conceived Christ in faith, kept the faith that she had once for all received from God and never lost. Thus could she wait with assured hope for the glory of the Risen Lord.” [\[1061\]](#)

Our Lady’s Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart teaches us how to commemorate the death of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. At His Incarnation, Our Lady was the Lord’s first Tabernacle. During His Passion and Crucifixion,

the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary became the living Altar on which the Lamb offered Himself for the sins of the world. But **it was on Holy Saturday that the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart first reigned**, because the Virgin Mother solitarily trusted in the Resurrection of her most beloved Son, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Teach souls to love the Heart of My Mother, pierced by the very sorrow which pierced Mine...**The Heart of My Mother has the right to be called Sorrowful**, and **I wish this title to be placed before that of Immaculate**, for she won it herself.” (Our Lord to Berthe Petit)

In the following pages of this book, you are invited to read the Supplement section, which includes information about how to participate in [The Five First Saturdays Devotion](#), or how to pray the various [Fatima prayers](#). Also included is [The Little Crown of the Twelve Stars of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#), the [15 Rosary Promises](#) given by Our Lady to Blessed Alan de la Roche, the [Holy Rosary According to the Method of St. Louis de Montfort](#), the [15 Rosary Mysteries for Beginners](#), and [How to Pray the Rosary \(For Beginners\)](#).

If you liked this book, you may also enjoy another work written by the same author:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marianna is the author of [Guadalupe, Secrets of the Image](#) and the monthly columnist for “Secrets of the Catholic City,” which appeared in *Catholic Family News*. A wife and homeschooling mother, she was the founding publisher of *The Catholic Family’s Magnificat!* Magazine, as well as the first home education editor of *Sursum Corda* (which later merged with *Latin Mass* magazine). Her contributors included Fr. John Hardon, S.J. (now Servant of God), Dr. Mary Kay Clark, Laura Berquist, and many others.

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THE FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS

I. The History and the Text of the Promise

As explained by Sr. Lucia and documented by Frere Michel de la Sainte Trinite: “On December 10, 1925, the Most Holy Virgin appeared to Sister Lucia (then a postulant of the Institute of the Dorothean Sisters at Pontevedra, Spain) and by Her side, elevated on a luminous cloud, was the Child Jesus. The Most Holy Virgin rested Her hand on her shoulder and as She did so, She showed Her Heart encircled by thorns, which She was holding in her other hand.

“At the same time, the Child said: ‘Have compassion on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother, covered with thorns, with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment and there is none to make an act of reparation to remove them.’

“Then the Most Holy Virgin said: ‘Look, my daughter, at My Heart, surrounded with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce Me at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You at least try to console Me and announce in My name that I promise to assist, at the moment of death, with all the graces necessary for salvation, all those who:

- (1) on the first Saturday of five consecutive months,
- (2) shall confess,
- (3) receive Holy Communion,
- (4) recite five decades of the Rosary and
- (5) keep Me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary,
- (6) with the intention of making reparation to Me.’”

II. Some Precisions on the Conditions of the Promise

(I) WHY FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS?

Our Lord Himself gave the answer to Sister Lucia:

“My daughter, the reason is simple. There are five types of offences and blasphemies committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary:

- 1–Blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception;
 - 2–Blasphemies against Her Virginity;
 - 3–Blasphemies against Her Divine Maternity, in refusing at the same time to recognise Her as the Mother of men;
 - 4–The blasphemies of those who publicly seek to sow in the hearts of children, indifference or scorn or even hatred of this Immaculate Mother;
 - 5–The offences of those who outrage Her directly in Her holy images.
- Here, my daughter, is the reason why the Immaculate Heart of Mary inspired Me to ask for this little act of reparation. (May 29,1930)

(2) THE CONFESSION

Sister Lucia asked Our Blessed Lord: “My Jesus! Many souls find it difficult to confess on Saturday. Will Thou allow a confession within eight days to be valid?

He replied:

“Yes. It can even be made later on, provided that the souls are in the state of grace when they receive Me on the First Saturday and that they had the intention of making reparation to the Sacred Heart of Mary.”

Lucia then asked, “My Jesus! And those who forget to form this intention?”

“They can form it at the next confession, taking advantage of their first opportunity to go to confession.” (February 15, 1927)

In brief, therefore (a) the confession should be made as close as possible to the First Saturday; (b) we must be sorry for our sins, not only because we have offended God but also with the intention of making reparation to the Sacred Heart of Mary.

(3) THE HOLY COMMUNION

Father Goncalves, Lucia's confessor, asked her in a letter of May 29, 1930 if one cannot fulfil all the conditions on a Saturday, can it be done on Sunday? People in the country, for example, will not be able very often because they live quite far away. Our Lord gave the answer to Sister Lucia during the night of May 29–30:

“The practice of this devotion will be equally acceptable on the Sunday following the First Saturday when My priests, for a just cause, allow it to souls.”

Let us note that it is to His priests, and not to the individual conscience, that Jesus gives the responsibility of granting this additional concession.

(4) THE ROSARY

Since it is a question of repairing for offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, what other vocal prayer could be more pleasing to her than that which she requested the people to recite every day?

(5) THE 15 MINUTE MEDITATION

This is in **addition** to the recitation of the Rosary. It requires, in Lucia's own words, to keep Our Lady company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary. It is not required to meditate on all fifteen mysteries. To meditate on one or two is sufficient.

(6) THE INTENTION OF MAKING REPARATION

"You, at least, try to console Me." Without this general intention, without this will of love which desires to make reparation to Our Lady, to console Her, all these external practices are worth nothing for the Promise. This is clear.

III. The Promises Attached to this Devotion

(I) THE SALVATION OF OUR OWN SOUL

"To all those who, on the First Saturday of five consecutive months... fulfil all the conditions requested, I promise to assist them at the hour of death with all the graces necessary for the salvation of their soul." This little devotion practised with a good heart, is then enough to procure infallibly for us...*ex opere operato*, so to speak—as with the sacraments—the grace of final perseverance, of eternal salvation! And this promise is without any exclusion, limitation, restriction. "To all those... I promise" Heaven for eternity for five Holy Communions!

(2) THE SALVATION OF SINNERS

"So numerous are the souls which the justice of God condemns for sins committed against me that I come to ask for reparation. Sacrifice yourself for this intention and pray." (Our Lady to Sister Lucia at Tuy, June 13, 1929.)

"In consideration of this little devotion, They (Jesus and Mary) wish to give the grace of pardon to souls who have had the misfortune of offending

the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” wrote Sister Lucia in a letter of May, 1930.

(3) PEACE IN THE WORLD

“Whether the world has war or peace depends on the practice of this devotion, along with the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is why I desire its propagation so ardently, especially because this is also the will of our dear Mother in Heaven.” (Sister Lucia, March 19, 1939.)

(Source: Frere Michel de la Sainte Trinite, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: The Secret and the Church*, Vol. II, pp. 245-277.)

FATIMA PRAYERS

I. PRAYERS TAUGHT BY ST. MICHAEL

PRAYER OF ADORATION

“My God, I believe, I adore, I trust, and I love Thee. I beg pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not trust, and do not love Thee.”

PRAYER TO THE HOLY TRINITY IN REPARATION AND FOR THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS

“O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly, and I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference with which He Himself is offended. And, through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of all poor sinners.”

PRAYER TO THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

“O most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee! My God, my God, I love Thee in the Most Blessed Sacrament.”

II. PRAYERS TAUGHT BY THE VIRGIN MARY

ROSARY DECADE PRAYER REQUESTED BY OUR LADY OF FATIMA

“O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those with the greatest need of Thy Mercy.”

FATIMA SACRIFICE PRAYER

“O my Jesus, it is for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

III. FATIMA MORNING OFFERING

COMPOSED BY SR. LUCIA, SERVANT OF GOD

“O my God, in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary (here kiss the Brown Scapular), I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, joining with it my every thought, word and action of this day.

O my Jesus, I desire today to gain every indulgence and merit I can, and I offer them, together with myself, to Mary Immaculate, that she may best apply them to the interests of Thy Most Sacred Heart. Precious Blood of Jesus, save us! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. Amen.”

**THE LITTLE CROWN
OF
THE TWELVE STARS
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

(As taught by St. Louis de Montfort)

I. CROWN OF EXCELLENCE

(To honor the Divine Maternity of the Blessed Virgin, her ineffable
Virginity, her purity without stain and her innumerable virtues.)

1.) ***Our Father, Hail Mary.***

Blessed art thou, O Virgin Mary, who didst bear the Lord, the Creator of the world; thou didst give birth to Him Who made thee, and remainest a Virgin forever.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

2.) ***Hail Mary.***

O holy and immaculate Virgin, I know not with what praise to extol thee, since thou didst bear in thy womb the very One Whom the Heavens cannot contain.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

3.) ***Hail Mary.***

Thou are all fair, O Virgin Mary, and there is no stain in thee.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

4.) ***Hail Mary.***

Thy virtues, O Virgin, surpass the stars in number.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

Glory be to the Father.

II. CROWN OF POWER

(To honor the royalty of the Blessed Virgin, her magnificence, her
universal mediation and the strength of her rule.)

5.) ***Our Father, Hail Mary.***

Glory be to thee, O Empress of the world! Bring us with thee to the joys

of Heaven.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

6.) *Hail Mary.*

Glory be to thee, O treasure house of the Lord's graces! Grant us a share in thy riches.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

7.) *Hail Mary.*

Glory be to thee, O Mediatrix between God and man! Through thee may the Almighty be favorable to us.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

8.) *Hail Mary.*

Glory be to thee who destroyest heresies and crushest demons! Be thou our loving guide.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

Glory be to the Father.

III. CROWN OF GOODNESS

(To honor the mercy of the Blessed Virgin toward sinners, the poor, the just and the dying.)

9.) *Our Father, Hail Mary.*

Glory be to thee, O refuge of sinners! Intercede for us with God.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

10.) *Hail Mary.*

Glory be to thee, O Mother of orphans! Render the Almighty favorable to us.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

11.) *Hail Mary.*

Glory be to thee, O joy of the just! Lead us with thee to the joys of Heaven.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

12.) *Hail Mary.*

Glory be to thee who are ever ready to assist us in life and death! Lead us

with thee to the kingdom of Heaven!

Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; Rejoice a thousand times!

Glory be to the Father.

Let Us Pray:

-Hail, Mary, Daughter of God the Father;

-Hail, Mary, Mother of God the Son;

-Hail, Mary, Spouse of the Holy Ghost;

-Hail, Mary, Temple of the most Holy Trinity;

-Hail, Mary, my Mistress, my treasure, my joy, Queen of my heart; my Mother, my life, my sweetness, my dearest hope—yea, my heart and my soul!

I am all thine and all that I have is Thine, O Virgin blessed above all things! Let thy soul be in me to magnify the Lord; let thy spirit be in me to rejoice in God.

Set thyself, O faithful Virgin, as a seal upon my heart, that in thee and through thee I may be found faithful to God.

Receive me, O gracious Virgin, among those whom thou lovest and teacheest, whom thou leadest, nourishest and protectest as thy children.

Grant that for love of thee, I may despise all earthly consolations and ever cling to those of Heaven until, through the Holy Ghost, thy faithful Spouse, and through thee, His faithful spouse, Jesus Christ thy Son be formed in me for the glory of the Father. **Amen.**

THE 15 ROSARY PROMISES

**(Given by Our Lady
to Blessed Alan de la Roche)**

1. Whoever shall faithfully serve Me by the recitation of the Rosary shall receive signal graces.

2. I promise My special protection and the greatest graces to all who shall recite the Rosary.

3. The Rosary shall be a powerful armor against hell. It will destroy vice, decrease sin, and defeat heresies.

4. It will cause virtue and good works to flourish; it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will withdraw the hearts of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and it will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means!

5. The soul which recommends itself to Me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish.

6. Whoever shall recite the Rosary devoutly, applying himself to the consideration of its sacred mysteries, shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise Him in His justice; he shall not perish by an unprovided death; if he be just, he shall remain in the grace of God and become worthy of eternal life.

7. Whoever shall have a true devotion for the Rosary shall not die without the Sacraments of the Church.

8. Those who are faithful in reciting the Rosary shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces; at the moment of death, they shall participate in the merits of the saints in Paradise.

9. I shall deliver from Purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.

10. The faithful children of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in Heaven.

11. You shall obtain all you ask of Me by the recitation of the Rosary.

12. All those who propagate the Holy Rosary shall be aided by Me in their necessities.

13. I have obtained from My Divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.

14. All we who recite the Rosary are My sons and brothers of My only

Son, Jesus Christ.

15. Devotion to My Rosary is a great sign of predestination.

THE HOLY ROSARY ACCORDING TO THE METHOD OF ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT

Introductory Prayer of St. Louis de Montfort

I unite with all the saints in Heaven, with all the just on earth, and with all the faithful here present. I unite with Thee, O my Jesus, in order to praise worthily Thy holy Mother and to praise Thee in her and through her. I renounce all the distractions I may have during this Rosary, which I wish to say with modesty, attention, and devotion, just as if it were to be the last of my life.

We offer Thee, O most Holy Trinity, this *Creed* in honor of all the mysteries of our Faith; this *Our Father* and these three *Hail Mary's* in honor of the unity of Thy Essence and the Trinity of Thy Persons. We ask of Thee a lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent charity. Amen.

Apostle's Creed, Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, Glory Be.

THE FIVE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

First Joyful Mystery:

The Annunciation

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy Incarnation in Mary's womb, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through her intercession, a profound humility. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*. At the end of the *Glory Be*, pray the "Fatima Decade prayer, as requested by Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima:

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those with the greatest need of Thy mercy.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Annunciation come down into our souls. Amen.**

Second Joyful Mystery:

The Visitation of the Virgin

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of the Visitation of

Thy holy Mother to her cousin St. Elizabeth and the sanctification of St. John the Baptist in the womb, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, charity toward our neighbor. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Visitation come down into our souls. Amen.**

Third Joyful Mystery:

The Nativity of Our Lord

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy Nativity in the stable of Bethlehem, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, detachment from the things of the world, contempt of riches, and love of holy poverty. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Nativity come down into our souls. Amen.**

Fourth Joyful Mystery:

The Presentation in the Temple

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy Presentation in the Temple and the Purification of Mary, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, purity of body and soul. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Presentation in the Temple come down into our souls. Amen.**

Fifth Joyful Mystery:

The Finding of the Christ Child in the Temple

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Mary's finding Thee in the Temple, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through her intercession, the gift of true wisdom. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Finding of Our Lord in the Temple come down into our souls. Amen.**

THE FIVE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

First Sorrowful Mystery:

The Agony in the Garden

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy Agony in the Garden of Olives, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, contrition for our sins. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Agony in the Garden come down into our souls. Amen.**

Second Sorrowful Mystery:

The Scourging at the Pillar

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy bloody Scourging, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy Holy Mother, the grace of mortifying our senses. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Scourging come down into our souls. Amen.**

Third Sorrowful Mystery:

The Crowning of Thorns

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy being crowned with thorns, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, contempt of the world. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Crowning with Thorns come down into our souls. Amen.**

Fourth Sorrowful Mystery:

The Carrying of the Cross

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy carrying of the Cross, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, patience in bearing our crosses. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Carrying of the Cross come down into our souls. Amen.**

Fifth Sorrowful Mystery:

The Crucifixion of Our Lord

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy Crucifixion and ignominious death on Calvary, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, the conversion of sinners, the perseverance of the just, and the relief of the souls in Purgatory. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Mystery of the Crucifixion come down into our souls. Amen.**

THE FIVE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

First Glorious Mystery:

The Resurrection of Our Lord

We offer thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy glorious Resurrection, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, love of God and fervor in Thy service. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Resurrection come down into our souls. Amen.**

The Second Glorious Mystery:

The Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of Thy triumphant Ascension, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, an ardent desire for Heaven, our true home. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the Resurrection come down into our souls. Amen.**

The Third Glorious Mystery:

The Descent of the Holy Ghost on Mary and the Apostles

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of the Mystery of

Pentecost, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, the coming of the Holy Ghost into our souls. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the mystery of Pentecost come down into our souls. Amen.**

The Fourth Glorious Mystery:

The Assumption of the Virgin Mary

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of the resurrection and triumphant Assumption of Thy Holy Mother into Heaven, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through her intercession, a tender devotion for so good a Mother. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the mystery of the Assumption come down into our souls. Amen.**

The Fifth Glorious Mystery:

The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin

We offer Thee, O Lord Jesus, this decade in honor of the Coronation of Thy Holy Mother, and we ask of Thee, through this Mystery and through her intercession, perseverance in grace and a crown of glory thereafter. Amen.

One *Our Father*, 10 *Hail Mary's*, one *Glory Be*, and *O my Jesus*.

Conclude the mystery: **May the grace of the mystery of the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin come down into our souls. Amen.**

Concluding Prayer

Hail Mary, beloved Daughter of the Eternal Father, admirable Mother of the Son, faithful Spouse of the Holy Ghost, august Temple of the Most Holy Trinity!

Hail, Sovereign Princess, to whom all owe subjection in Heaven and on earth!

Hail, sure Refuge of Sinners, Our Lady of Mercy, who hast never refused any request.

All sinful though I am, I cast myself at thy feet and beseech thee to

obtain from Jesus, thy beloved Son, contrition and pardon for all my sins, as well as the gift of divine wisdom.

I consecrate myself entirely to thee with all that I have. I choose thee today for my Mother and Mistress. Treat me, then, as the least of thy children and the most obedient of thy servants.

Listen, my princess, listen to the sighs of a heart that desires to love and serve thee faithfully. Let it never be said that of all who have had recourse to thee, I was the first to be abandoned.

O my hope, O my life, O my faithful and Immaculate Virgin Mary, defend me, nourish me, hear me, teach me, and save me. Amen.

THE ROSARY MYSTERIES FOR BEGINNERS

A Rosary is one-third of Our Lady's Psalter. The **Psalter** is comprised of all 15 "decades" (meaning ten *Hail Mary*'s, which are preceded by an *Our Father* and followed by the *Gloria*, otherwise known as the *Glory Be*) while meditating on the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries in succession. A **Rosary**, however, includes only **one set of Mysteries** while praying five decades.

Traditionally, each day of the week is set apart for a particular Rosary Mystery, as follows:

THE ROSARY MYSTERIES

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES (Monday and Thursday)

- First Joyful Mystery*
 - The Annunciation of Gabriel to the Virgin Mary**
- Second Joyful Mystery*
 - The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth**
- Third Joyful Mystery*
 - The Nativity of Our Lord**
- Fourth Joyful Mystery*
 - The Presentation of the Infant Jesus**
- Fifth Joyful Mystery*
 - The Finding of the Child Jesus**

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (Tuesday and Friday; also on all Sundays of Advent and Lent)

- First Sorrowful Mystery*
 - Agony of Jesus in the Garden**
- Second Sorrowful Mystery*
 - Jesus is Scourged at the Pillar**
- Third Sorrowful Mystery*
 - Jesus is Crowned with Thorns**
- Fourth Sorrowful Mystery*
 - Jesus Carries His Cross**
- Fifth Sorrowful Mystery*

–The Crucifixion of Jesus

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (Wednesday and Saturday; also on all Sundays after Easter, inclusive—but not on Sundays during Advent and Lent because they are penitential seasons of the Church)

–First Glorious Mystery

–The Resurrection of Jesus

–Second Glorious Mystery

–The Ascension of Jesus

–Third Glorious Mystery

–The Descent of the Holy Ghost

–Fourth Glorious Mystery

–The Assumption of the Virgin

–Fifth Glorious Mystery

–The Coronation of Mary

HOW TO PRAY THE ROSARY (FOR BEGINNERS)

- 1. While holding the Crucifix, make the Sign of the Cross and pray:**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

- 2. While still holding the Crucifix, next pray the Apostles Creed:**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.

- 3. Pray the Our Father on the first large bead.**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

- 4. Pray the Hail Mary on each of the next three beads, asking for an increase in the virtues of faith, hope and charity.**

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

- 5. Pray the Gloria (the Glory Be) on the large, middle bead between each 10 beads.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it

was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

6. Announce the first **Rosary Mystery** and pray the **Our Father** on the same middle bead.

7. On each of the ten following small beads (also referred to as a decade) recite a **Hail Mary** while reflecting on the mystery.

8. At the end of each mystery, pray the **Fatima Prayer** requested by the Virgin of Fatima.

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those with the greatest need of Thy mercy.

9. On the next large bead between the decades pray the **Gloria:**
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

10. Repeat all the steps above for each mystery.

11. When the fifth mystery is completed, again pray the **Fatima Prayer** and the **Gloria**. The Rosary is then customarily concluded with the **Hail, Holy Queen**, followed by the prayer to God and then three prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father. This last part is just as important, since the prayers for the Pope complete the requirements to gain a **plenary indulgence**. Customarily, the three prayers are one *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, and one *Gloria*, as follows in Step 12.

12. HAIL, HOLY QUEEN

Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary!

Pray for us, o holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant we

beseech Thee that by meditating upon these mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise. Through the same Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Then make the following request: **“For the intentions of the Holy Father and to ask for the plenary indulgence”** (acquired when praying a Rosary with the family, in a church group, etc., each person who prays the Rosary may also offer the plenary indulgence to the Poor Souls in Purgatory). If praying privately, this sentence can still be said aloud. What is necessary is that the three following prayers should be offered with the explicit purpose of praying for the current Pope’s intentions (that is to say, to offer prayers so that he may fulfill the duties of the papal office in accordance with God’s most holy Will):

Conclude with one *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, one *Gloria*.

NOTES

PART I FATIMA'S PROPHETIC MISSION

- [1] Pope: we would be mistaken to think that Fatima's prophetic message is complete, Asia News, May 13, 2010
[<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pope:-we-would-be-mistaken-to-think-that-Fatima%C3%A2%E2%82%AC%E2%84%A2s-prophetic-mission-is-complete-18398.html>]
- [2] Pope Benedict XVI, *Sermon at Fatima*, May 13, 2007. [Emphasis added.]
- [3] Ratzinger, Cardinal Joseph, as quoted by Vittorio Messori, "Here is Why the Faith is in Crisis," *Jesus Magazine*, November 11, 1984: p. 79.
- [4] "My Catholic Encyclopedia." *The Family Rosary Edition of the Holy Bible* [Chicago, IL: The Catholic Press, Inc., 1952]: p. 211. [Emphasis added.]
- [5] Ibid., p. 166.
- [6] *The Concise Catholic Dictionary*. [Kansas, MO: The Angelus Press, 1992. Republished from the original 1943 edition, with Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur]: p. 223.
- [7] "My Catholic Encyclopedia," loc.cit. [Emphasis in the original.]
- [8] Ibid. [Emphasis in the original.]
- [9] Jn. 3: 17, 5:23; 6:39, 58; Gal. 4:4.
- [10] Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.
- [11] Apoc. 1:11.
- [12] Sr. Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*. [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: pp. 62, 64.
- [13] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima, Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989]: pp. 93-95.
- [14] Ibid., p. 71.
- [15] Pope, Hugh. "Angels." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907]
[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm>].
- [16] Ps. 102:20; Matt. 4:11; 13:49; 26:53.
- [17] Dan. 10:13; Apoc. 12:7.

[18] Jude 1:9.

[19] Butler, Alban. *Lives of the Saints*. (Forgotten Books): p. 372. Cited in “St. Michael (Roman Catholic),” Wikipedia.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Michael_%28Roman_Catholic%29#cite_1 Alban_Butler_page_372-13]

[20] 2 Pet. 2:4.

[21] Dan. 8: 15-26; 9: 21-27.

[22] Dan. 10:1. [Emphasis added.]

[23] Dan. 10:2.

[24] Dan. 10:11. [Emphasis added.]

[25] Dan. 10: 12.

[26] Dan. 10:13-14.

[27] Eph. 6: 11-12. [Emphasis added.]

[28] Mt.12: 43-45. [Emphasis added.]

[29] Dan.10:21.

[30] Dan. 12:1.

[31] Jude 1:9.

[32] Origen. *De Principiis* III. 2.2. Cited in Holweck, Frederick. “St. Michael the Archangel.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911.]

[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm>].

[33] Apoc. 12:7.

[34] Holweck, Frederick. “St. Michael the Archangel.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol.10. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911] [<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm>]

[35] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. Originally published in 1955 by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA using entirely new type set under the author’s supervision, from which TAN’s 1975 printing was made]: p. 200.

[36] Ibid., p. 288.

[37] Butler, loc. cit.

[38] Gen. 3:24.

[39] Num. 22:22.

[40] 2 Kings 19:35.

[41] Holweck, loc. cit.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Apoc. 12:1.

[44] McGlynn, O.P., Thomas. *Vision of Fatima*. [Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1949]: pp. 28-29.

[45] Walsh, William Thomas. *Our Lady of Fatima*. [Image Book: New York, May 1990. First Image edition published 1954]: pp. 207-209.

[46] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*. [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 16th Edition, July 2007]: pp. 70-71.

[47] Ibid., p. 159.

PART 2

THE SIGNS AT FATIMA, MAY-SEPTEMBER 1917

[48] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation 1989]: p. 238.

[49] Ibid., pp.112-113.

[50] Ibid, p.112.

[51] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*. [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 16th edition, 2007]: p. 162.

[52] McGlynn, O.P., Fr. Thomas. *Vision of Fatima*. [Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1949]: p. 64.

[53] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[54] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p.161.

[55] McGlynn, loc. cit.

[56] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, loc. cit., pp. 160-161. Also see John de Marchi, I.M.C, *The True Story of Fatima* [Constable, NY: The Fatima Center. Republished from the 1947 edition]: p. 23.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid, p. 160.

[59] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*. [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 16th edition, 2007]: p. 222.

[60] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976 edition]: p. 165.

[61] Estimates of the number of individuals who came to Fatima, Portugal on July 13, 1917 vary from 800 to 5,000. Clearly, such a disparity is revealing, depending on the veracity or the ulterior motives of witnesses. Be that as it may, the events of July 13—including the announcement of a “sign” that would be given in October—resulted in an estimated 70,000-100,000 people present at Fatima on October 13, 1917, the day of the Miracle of the Sun. See Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. 1: pp. 185, 214.

[62] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 183.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Walsh, William Thomas. *Our Lady of Fatima*. [Image Book: New York, May 1990. First Image edition published 1954]: p. 80.

[65] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, loc.cit.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] This was the aurora borealis on the night of January 25th to 26th, 1938, which Lucia considered to be the God-given sign of which the Virgin warned if her requests were not heeded. This unusual sign occurred shortly before Adolph Hitler illegally annexed Austria to Germany.

[69] *The Message of Fatima*, as issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Vatican website.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_fatima_en.html]

[70] de Marchi, I.M.C, John. *The True Story of Fatima* [Constable, NY: The Fatima Center. Republished from the 1947 edition]: p. 37.

[71] Sister Lucia, op. cit., p. 163.

[72] de Marchi, loc.cit.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 224.

[75] Ibid., p. 223.

[76] Ibid., p. 224.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., p.235.

[79] Ibid., p. 257.

[80] Ibid., p. 260.

[81] Barthas, Canon C. Cited by Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 284.

PART 3
THE CLOUD,
SIGN OF THE HOLY TRINITY

[82] For examples, please see Heb. 2:3-4; Ps. 96:17, Judg. 6:17; Josh. 24: 15-17; Isa. 7:14; Exod. 3:12; Num. 17:20.

[83] *The Concise Catholic Dictionary* [Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, with 1943 Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur]: p.331.

[84] “Theophany.” Wikipedia.
[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theophany>].

[85] Ibid.

[86] Gambero, S.M., Luigi. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999]: p. 211, Tractatus de Psalmo 77, 14: CCL 78, 72.

[87] “Ambrose.” *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Second Edition, s.v., p. 18.

[88] Palmer, S.J., Paul F., *Mary in the Documents of the Church* [London: Burns & Oats, 1953]: p. 27.

[89] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers, reprinted in 1931]: p. 261.

[90] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation 1989]: p. 265.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat, and Imprimatur*, 1949]: #5.

[94] Ibid., #218.6.

[95] Ibid.

PART 4
SIGNS FROM THE EAST

[96] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation 1989]: p. 238.

[97] As stated elsewhere in this book: “A true sign can possess one or more of the following seven functions: it confirms God’s word, His goodness, authenticates prophecy, verifies God’s blessings and His intervention for the sake of the elect, strengthens the faithful with hope, insures or testifies God’s Presence, or declares His judgment upon sin.”

[98] “In brief, ‘Mariophany’ may be defined as ‘appearances of Mary’ to man. Like the word ‘theophany,’ however, there are rich, deeper meanings to this one term. ‘Mariophany’ refers to the apparitions of Mary when She, already assumed body and soul into Heaven, appears visibly to a person (or persons) to remind all of mankind to return to God, Who is Lawgiver, Judge, and Prophet. ‘Mariophany’ can also mean the manifestation of Mary in which God emphasizes Her office throughout all of salvation history, from *Genesis* to the *Apocalypse*. Finally, ‘Mariophany’ signifies God’s Triune Presence in the Immaculate Virgin, through whom he reveals Himself via ‘sensible signs.’”

[99] Frère Michel, loc. cit., p. 265.

[100] O’Lavery, B.A., Fr. H. *The Mother of God and Her Glorious Feasts*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, reprinted in 1987 under its new title. Originally published between 1908 and 1915, under the title *The Mother of God’s Glorious Feasts*. First reprinted in 1925 and later reprinted again in 1977 by Marian Publications, South Bend, Indiana]: p. 145.

[101] *In Annunt s.1*. Cited by St. Alphonsus di Liguori, *The Glories of Mary* [Brooklyn, NY: The Redemptorist Fathers, p. 1931]: p. 239.

[102] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus, *The Glories of Mary* [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers, 1931]: p. 239.

[103] O’Lavery, op. cit., p. 157.

[104] Matt. 2: 2,9.

[105] Jth. 15:10.

[106] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: #262.

[107] Damascene, St. John [c. 675-c.749 A.D.]. Cited by Michael Davies, *The Catholic Sanctuary and the Second Vatican Council*. Catholic Tradition website [<http://www.catholictradition.org/Eucharist/sanctuary1.htm>]

[108] “Signs and Symbols,” Catholic Tradition website

[<http://www.catholictradition.org/Saints/signs3.htm>]

PART 5
STARS AT HIGH NOON
OUR LORD, OUR LADY,& THE CHURCH

[109] Frère Michel of the Holy Trinity. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation 1989]: p. 238.

[110] Ibid., p. 273.

[111] Ibid., p. 257.

[112] Ibid., p. 258. [Emphasis added.]

[113] Septuagint: The ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament), approved by the Catholic Church but rejected by orthodox Jews and Protestant sects.

[114] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. Originally published in 1955 by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA from which the 1975 printing was made]: p. 276.

[115] For example, see 2 Pet. 1:19.

[116] Chrysostom, St. John. "Homily 6 on Matthew." Translated by George Prevost and revised by M.B. Riddle. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 10*. Edited by Philip Schaff. [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888.] Revised and edited for New Advent website by Kevin Knight.

[<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/200106.htm>. [Emphasis added.]

[117] Commentator Prefaces to *The Book of Psalms*, Ch. 18, and *The Book of Job*, Ch. 8, in the *Holy Bible*, Douay-Rheims-Challoner translation.

[118] Kramer, op. cit., p. 282.

[119] Num. 24:14; Isa.14:12.

[120] Kramer, op. cit., p. 122.

[121] "The Christian law...has necessarily its priesthood to carry out the Divine Service, the principle act of which is the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the figure and renewal of that of Calvary. This priesthood has two degrees; the first, total and complete, the second an incomplete participation of the first. **The first belongs to the bishop.** This bishop is truly a priest (*sacerdos*), and even a high-priest; he has chief control of the Divine worship (*sacrorum antistes*), is the president of liturgical meetings; he has the fullness of the

priesthood, and administers all the sacraments. **The second degree belongs to the priest** (presbyter), who is also a *sacerdos*, but of the second rank; by his priestly ordination he receives the power to offer sacrifice (i.e., to celebrate the Eucharist), to forgive sins, to bless, to preach, to sanctify, and in a word to fulfill the non-reserved liturgical duties or priestly functions. In the exercise of these functions, however, he is subject to the authority of the bishop to whom he has promised canonical obedience; in certain cases he even requires not only authorization, but real jurisdiction, particularly to forgive sins and to take care of souls. Moreover, certain acts of the sacerdotal power, **affecting the society of which the bishop is the head**, are reserved to the latter—e.g., Confirmation, the final rite of Christian initiation, ordination...and the solemn consecration of new temples to God. Sacerdotal powers are conferred on priests by priestly ordination, and it is this ordination which puts them in the highest rank of the hierarchy after the bishop.” August Boudinhon, "Priest," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911.)

[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12406a.htm>]

[122] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat, and Imprimatur, 1949]: #235.

[123] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers]: pp. 121-122.

[124] 2 Pet. 1:19.

[125] Peters, Sister Danielle. “The Most Holy Name of Mary” *Marian Library International Marian Research Institute* website

[<http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/mostholyname.html>]

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. First published by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA from which the 1975 printing was made]: pp. 15, 400.

[131] Eudes, St. John. *The Admirable Heart of Mary*. [Buffalo, NY:

Immaculate Heart Publications]: p. 32.

[132] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: p. 200.

[133] Ibid, pp. 200-202.

[134] Frère Michel, op. cit., p. 183.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid. p. 224.

[138] Walsh, William Thomas. *Our Lady of Fatima*. [Image Book: New York, May 1990. First Image edition published 1954]: p. 80.

[139] Ibid.

[140] de Marchi, I.M.C, John. *The True Story of Fatima*. [Constable, NY: The Fatima Center. Republished from the 1947 edition]: p. 37.

[141] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*. [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: p. 163.

[142] de Marchi, loc.cit.

[143] Frère Michel, op. cit., p. 260.

PART 6

SIGNS OF GRACE:

THE SILENT PARABLES OF FATIMA

[144] Prachensky, Fr. Joseph. *Divine Parables Explained*. [South Bend, IN: Marian Publications, 1973. Reprinted from the 1890 edition]: pp. 15-16.

[145] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation 1989]: p. 183.

[146] Barthas, Canon C. *Fatima 1917-1968, Histoire complète des apparitions et de leurs suites* [Fatima Publications, 1969]: p. 146. Cited by Frère Michel, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation 1989]: p.160.

[147] Zach. 6:15.

[148] Frère Michel, loc. cit., p. 183.

[149] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*. [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: p. 165.

[150] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. Originally published in 1955 by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA using entirely new type set under the author's supervision, from which TAN's 1975 printing was made]: p. 192.

[151] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: #56-59.

[152] Sr. Mary Lucia, op. cit., p. 115.

[153] Exod. 25:17.

[154] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. Fourth Revised Edition. [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers, 1931 reprint]: p. 111.

[155] Kramer, op. cit., p. 278.

[156] Apoc. 21:10.

[157] Apoc. 21: 18, 21.

[158] Frère Michel, loc. cit.

[159] For examples, see Esther 11:8; Job 15:23; Joel 2:2; and Sophonias 1:15.

[160] Amos 5:18.

[161] Ibid., p. 206.

[162] Kramer, op. cit., p. 207.

[163] Lk. 23: 44-45.

[164] de Liguori, op. cit., p. 214.

[165] Cant. 6: 9.

[166] Sr. Mary Lucia, op. cit., p. 159.

[167] 1 Pet. 2:9.

[168] Walsh, William Thomas. *Our Lady of Fatima*. [Image Book: New York, May 1990. First Image edition published 1954]: p. 80.

[169] 3 Kings 19: 9.

[170] 3 Kings 19:10.

[171] 3 Kings 19: 11-13.

[172] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: #261.

[173] Apoc. 7: 16-17.

PART 7

MOTHER OF GOD, REFUGE OF SINNERS

[174] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation 1989]: p. 238.

[175] de Marchi, I.M.C, John. *The True Story of Fatima*. [Constable, NY: The Fatima Center. Republished from the 1947 edition]: p. 37.

[176] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*. [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: p. 163.

[177] 2 Kings 22: 14. Also see Exod. 9:23; 1 Kings 2:10; 1 Kings 7:10; 1 Kings 12:17-18; Job 26:14; Job 37: 4-5; Job 40:4; Eccles: 43:18.

[178] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 235.

[179] Apoc. 11:13.

[180] Exod. 19:6.

[181] Ps. 76:19.

[182] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, loc.cit.

[183] Isa. 29:6.

[184] Mt.27-54; 28:2.

[185] Acts 16:26.

[186] Apoc.4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:8.

[187] Apoc. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 11:19; and 16:8.

[188] Apoc. 4:5.

[189] Apoc. 8:5.

[190] Apoc. 11:1.

[191] Apoc. 11: 3-13.

[192] Apoc. 11:18-19.

[193] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. Originally published in 1955 by Buechler

Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA using entirely new type set under the author's supervision, from which TAN's 1975 printing was made]: p. 266.

[194] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, op. cit., p. 162.

[195] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 224.

[196] Apoc. 4: 1-3. [Emphasis added.]

[197] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. Revised Fourth Edition. [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers]: p. 203.

[198] Gen. 9:13.

[199] Apoc. 10: 1-3.

[200] Kramer, op. cit., pp. 239-240.

[201] Meagher, D.D., Fr. James L. *How Christ Said the First Mass*.

[Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1984. Reprinted from the 1906 edition by Christian Press Association Publishing Co., NY, Reprinted several times, beginning in 1975, by Marian Publications, South Bend, IN]: p.139.

[202] Kramer, op cit., p. 51.

PART 8

A SHOWER OF PETALS: OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES

[203] O'Laverty, B.A., Fr. H. *The Mother of God and Her Glorious Feasts*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers. Originally published between 1908 and approx.. 1915 under the title, *The Mother of God's Glorious Feasts*. Reprinted under new title in 1987 by TAN]: p. 185.

[204] Jn. 15:15.

[205] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation 1989]: p. 260.

[206] Stokes, Jr., John S. "Flower Theology." *Catholic Culture* website. [http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=5855]

[207] Prophecy of Isaias 35:2.

[208] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: #218.

- [209] Pope Leo XIII, *Octobri Mense* (On the Rosary, September 22, 1891): para. 4.
- [210] O'Lavery, op. cit., p. 183.
- [211] Eccles. 29: 17-19. [Emphasis added]
- [212] de Montfort, op. cit., #261; p. 164. [Emphasis added.]
- [213] Newman, Blessed John Henry. "Meditations on the Litany of Loreto, for the month of May: On the Immaculate Conception, Meditation #5: Mary is the 'Rosa Mystica,' the Mystical Rose." *Newman Reader: Meditations and Devotions* website
[<http://www.newmanreader.org/works/meditations/meditations1.html>]
[Emphasis added.]
- [214] Ibid. [Emphasis added.]
- [215] Cant. 4:12.
- [216] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. Revised Fourth Edition. [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers]: p. 306.
- [217] Newman, Ioc cit.
- [218] de Liguori, op. cit., p. 93.
- [219] Rom. 8:14.
- [220] *Baltimore Catechism and Mass #3*, Lesson 25: Confirmation, #330.
- [221] de Liguori, op. cit., p. 203.
- [222] Cant. 6:7, as cited by St. Alphonsus de Liguori, Ibid., p. 307.
- [223] de Liguori, op. cit., p. 307.
- [224] Commentator Prefaces to *The Book of Psalms*, Ch. 18, and *The Book of Job*, Ch. 8, in the *Holy Bible*, Douay-Rheims version.
- [225] "In *Genesis*, the patriarchs, head of the twelve tribes of Israel, are also called stars. And the words of *Daniel* (VII.10) cannot be restricted to the priests only of the Antiochean persecution but surely embrace all martyrs of that ordeal. **If the chosen people of the Old Testament are called stars, much more appropriately so the true believers of the Church of Jesus Christ.**" Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard, *The Book of Destiny* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. Originally published in 1955 by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA from which the 1975 printing was made]: p. 282.
- [226] Apoc. 2: 26-29; 22:16.
- [227] Apoc. 1:20.
- [228] Apoc. 12:1.
- [229] Morrow, Bishop Louis LaRavoire. *My Catholic Faith: A Manual in*

Religion. [Kansas City, MO: Sarto House. Republished from the 1954 edition by Sarto House, January 2000]: p. 396.

PART 9

OCTOBER: THE PROMISED SIGN

[230] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. 1. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989 English translation copyright by the author]: p.181.

[231] Ibid., p. 262.

[232] de St. Marie, Fr. Joseph (Professor of Theology, Pontifical Faculty of Saint Theresa, Rome). “Our Lady of Fatima is the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy.”

[<http://www.worldenslavementorpeace.com/e1cp2.asp>]

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid.

[235] “The Hour of Reparation,” *Home with God* website.

[<http://our.homewithgod.com/sacredheart/sacred4/>]

[236] Vennari, John. *The Permanent Instruction of the Alta Vendita* .

[Rockford IL: TAN Books and Publishers; Copyright 1999 by the author]: p. 14.

[237] Ibid., p. 38.

[238] de St. Marie, loc. cit.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Gheon, Henri, “*The Secret of Saint Margaret Mary*,” *Secrets of the Saints*. [Garden City, NY: Image Books: 1963] Republished on the Catholic Information Network (CIN) website. [<http://www.cin.org/sstmargm.html>]

[241] Ibid.

[242] 2 Thess. 2.

[243] Chojnowski, Dr. Peter. “The Miracle of the Sun as Proclamation of the Universal Queenship of Mary.” *Catholic Family News*, November 2007: p.16.

[244] de St. Marie, loc. cit.

[245] Eudes, St. John. “Divine Mercy Mirrored in Mary’s Heart,” excerpted from *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, Part Five, Chapter I.

[246] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 287.

[247] Johnston, Francis. *Fatima: The Great Sign*. [TAN Books, an imprint of St. Benedict Press, Reprint of the 1980 edition. With Nihil Obstat, Fr.

Vincentius Codina, C.M.F. and Imprimatur, Alberto Cosme de Amartal, Bishop of Fatima]: p. 61.

[248] Sr. Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: pp. 172-173.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 260.

[251] Sr. Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, "Letter on the Rosary," April 12, 1970. Published by S. Martina dos Reis, *Uma Vida*: pp. 372-373. Cited in Frère Michel, *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. 1: p. 284.

[252] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: The Secret and the Church*, Vol. II. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation copyright 1989 by the author]: pp.461-500.

[253] Johnston, op. cit., p. 70.

[254] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. 1. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation copyright 1983 by the author]: pp.293-294.

[255] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinite, op. cit., p. 292.

[256] Johnston, op cit., pp. 62-63.

[257] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinite, op. cit. pp. 323-324.

[258] Ibid., p. 336.

[259] Johnston, op. cit., p. 63.

[260] Ibid.

[261] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[262] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinite, op. cit., p. 337-338.

[263] Ibid., p. 339.

[264] Ibid.

[265] Ibid., p. 343.

[266] Johnston, op. cit., p. 64.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid.

[270] Ibid.

[271] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinite, op. cit., p. 340.

[272] Johnston, loc. cit., pp. 69-70.

[273] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinite, loc. cit., p. 356.

[274] Apoc. 12: 1-4. (Douay-Rheims Bible).

[275] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny*. [Rockford, IL:

TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. Originally published in 1955 by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA using entirely new type set under the author's supervision, from which TAN's 1975 printing was made]: p. 275.

[276] Ibid., p. 200.

[277] Mt. 24:3.

[278] Mc. 8:11; Mt. 16:1, as footnoted by Rev. H. Kramer, op. cit.

[279] Lk. 11:16.

[280] Kramer, loc. cit.

[281] For New Testament examples, see Mt. 12: 39; Mt. 24:30; Mt. 26:48; Lk. 2:12., Lk. 2:34; Lk. 11:30; Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 14:22; Apoc. 9:4; Apoc. 15:1. There are many others in the Old Testament.

[282] Gen. I: 14.

[283] Kramer, loc. cit.

[284] Pope St. Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (On the Immaculate Conception, Feb. 2, 1904): para. 24.

[285] Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus* (Apostolic Constitution Defining the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Nov. 1, 1950): para. 27.

[286] Brookby, Peter, ed. *Virgin Wholly Marvelous: Praises of Our Lady from the Popes, Councils, Saints, and Doctors of the Church* [Cambridge, MA: The Ravengate Press, 1981]. Cited in "Woman Clothed with the Sun," *Just for Catholics* website in quoting Pope Alexander III as speaking about the virginal conception of Our Lord, the painless birth of Christ, and the Virgin's departure from this life without corruption: "Mary conceived without detriment to her virginity, gave birth to her Son without pain, and departed hence without being subject to corruption."

[<http://www.justforcatholics.org/a131.htm>]

[287] Kramer, op. cit., p. 276.

[288] In the Old Testament, a **figure-type** is a person, place, thing or event *foreshadowing* a New Testament **archetype** (a perfect model or type). The New Testament **archetype** is always greater than its Old Testament figure-type.

[289] Isa. 7:14.

[290] Jn. 2:4, Jn. 19:26.

[291] Jn. 1:1.

[292] Gen. 3:15.

[293] Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (Apostolic Constitution Defining the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1854): para. 52.

[294] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: #52.

[295] **Authoritative**: By the authority of the Catholic Church is meant that the Pope and the bishops, as the lawful successors of the apostles, have power from Christ Himself to teach, to sanctify, and to govern the faithful in spiritual matters. **Infallibility of the Church**: By the special help of the Holy Ghost, the Church cannot err when it **defines** a matter of faith or morals to be held by all the faithful. [See Vatican Council I, Session 4, Chapter 4–“The Infallible Teaching Authority of the Roman Pontiff”];

Indefectible; meaning the Church, as Christ founded it, will last until the end of time. [Mt. 16:18; Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor.11:26] For further explanations, see Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* or *The Baltimore Catechism* #3, Part One: The Creed, “Lesson 12: The Marks and Attributes of the Church.”

[296] Sr. Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words: Sister Lucia’s Memoirs* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Center, 1976]: p. 159.

[297] de St. Marie, Fr. Joseph (Professor of Theology, Pontifical Faculty of Saint Theresa, Rome). “Our Lady of Fatima is the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy.”

[<http://www.worldenslavementorpeace.com/e1cp2.asp>]

[298] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. 1. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989]: p. 356.

[299] Jn. 6:30.

[300] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p.181.

[301] Kramer, op. cit.

[302] Johnston, loc. cit., p. 69. [Emphasis added.]

[303] Pope John Paul II, Sermon at Fatima, May 13, 1982.

[304] Johnston, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

[305] Ibid., p. 4.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Denzinger, Henry. *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*. [London: B.

Herder Book Co., 1957]: #1790, #1812, #1813.

PART 10
HIDDEN REVELATIONS:
THE STAR OF ESTHER
AND THE SECRETS OF FATIMA

[308] Sunrise and Sunset in Coimbra, timeanddate.com

[<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/astronomy.htm>]

[309] “Last Fatima Witness Sister Lucia Dies at 97.” *CathNews*.

[<http://www.cathnews.com/news/502/80.php>]

*According to the Portuguese news agency **Lusa**, Sr. Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, born in 1907 as Lucia de Jesus dos Santos, died of old age at the Carmelite convent of St. Teresa of Coimbra in central Portugal, at 5:25 pm local time.*

[310] Hebrew Date Converter

[<http://www.hebcal.com/converter/>] Let it be noted that the Gregorian calendar is solar-based, while the Hebrew (or Jewish) calendar is lunar-based. In October of 1582, Pope Gregory XVI advanced the solar calendar date by 11 days. Thus, according to the Gregorian calendar, which is used almost universally, Lucia died on the 13th of February. By the Jewish lunar calendar of 2005, she died on the 4th of Adar II. It is the author’s conjecture, which is submissive to the Church’s ultimate judgment, that God wished to highlight the 13th day of the universal Gregorian calendar, which would call the attention of Catholics familiar with the story of Our Lady of Fatima. However, by calling Lucia’s soul from this life in the Hebrew month of Adar, He also called attention to the sign of the Star of Esther on the robe of Our Lady of Fatima.

[311] Jer. 5:21.

[312] “Timeline: Adar in Jewish History.” Wikipedia.

[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adar>]. Also see “Moses.” Jewish Encyclopedia.

[<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11049-moses>]

and Janicki, Tobi. “eRosh Blog: The Birth and Death of Moses.”

[http://ffoz.org/blogs/2008/02/erosh_blog_the_birth_and_death_1.htm]

[313] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. Fourth Reprint Revised. [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers, 1931]: p. 39.

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[316] Stokes, Jr., John S. "Bible Gardens Revisited." Republished on the *Mary Gardens* website.

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[318] Esther 2:7.

[319] "Myrrh...Mor...Mordechai." Excerpts from Philip Goodman, *The Purim Anthology*. [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988 pages]: 126-27. *Jewish Heritage Online Magazine*.

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[321] Esther 1:5.

[322] Esther 1:9.

[323] Esther 1:11-12.

[324] Esther 1:19.

[325] Esther 2:1.

[326] Esther 2:8.

[327] Esther 2:12.

[328] Ibid.

[329] Exod. 30: 23.

[330] Esther 2:15-17.

[331] Lk. 1:28.

[332] Lk. 1:3, 2:16.

[333] "Introduction to the Jewish Calendar." *JewishGen*.

[http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/m_calint.htm]

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[335] "Purim." *Wikipedia*.

[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purim>]

[336] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts, Vol I*. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2003]: 147

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- [339] Esther 2: 21-22.
- [340] Esther 2:6.
- [341] Esther 3: 7.
- [342] Esther 3:12.
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- [345] Esther 4: 15-17.
- [346] Esther 14: 6-9.
- [347] Esther 7: 5-6.
- [348] Esther 7:23.
- [349] Esther 7: 7-8.
- [350] Esther 10.
- [351] Esther 8:2.
- [352] Esther 11.
- [353] Esther 9: 11-12.
- [354] Esther 13.
- [355] Esther. 7-18.
- [356] Apoc. 13:1.
- [357] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., pp. 158-159.
- [358] Ghéon, Henri. “The Secret of Saint Margaret Mary,” *Secrets of the Saints*. [Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1963] Republished on the *Catholic Information Network* (CIN) website.
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- [360] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., pp. 182-183.
- [361] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. II. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2003]: pp. 463-464.
- [362] Ibid., pp. 543-544.
- [363] *The Message of Fatima*, as issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 26, 2000. Vatican website.
[http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_fatima_en.html]

PART 11

FATIMA: THE SIGNS AND TRACES OF HIDDEN THINGS

[364] Eccles. 42:19.

[365] Heb. 2:3-4; Ps. 96: 17; Judg. 6:17; Josh. 24:15-17; Isa. 7:14; Exod. 3:12; Num. 17:20.

[366] Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis* (Concerning Some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine Christian Doctrine, August 12, 1950).

[367] The writer here employs as a paraphrase the title of a three-volume book set, referencing the works of Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Volumes I, II, and III*.

[368] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. Originally published in 1955 by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA using entirely new type set under the author's supervision, from which TAN's 1975 printing was made]: p. 40. [Emphasis added.]

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[370] De Marchi, I. M.C., John. *Fatima from the Beginning*. [Missões Consolata, Fátima, 1986]: p. 227.

[371] Isa. 7:14.

[372] Gen 3:15.

[373] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: The Secret and the Church*, Vol. II. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2003]: pp.9-10.

[374] Pope St. Pius X, *Our Apostolic Mandate* (Letter to the French Bishops and Archbishops on the "Sillon," August 25, 1910): para.11.

[375] Vatican Council I, can. 3.

[376] Pope St. Pius X, op. cit., para. 12-13.

[377] Ibid., para. 39.

[378] Lk. 17:21.

[379] Tob. 12:7.

[380] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2003]: p. 145.

[381] Ibid., p. 149.

[382] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit.,146.

- [383] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. Fourth Reprint Revised. [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers, 1931]: p. 39.
- [384] Belloc, Hilaire. *Europe and the Faith*. [Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers; retypeset and republished 1992. Originally New York: The Paulist Press, 1920]: p. 3.
- [385] Kramer, op cit., p. 17.
- [386] Denzinger. *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*. “Pius IX,” #1788. [Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 1954]: p. 444.
- [387] Ibid., “Pius XII,” #2293; p. 621.
- [388] Pope, Hugh T. “Angels,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907]
[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm>]
- [389] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., pp. 182-183
- [390] *The Message of Fatima*, as issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 26, 2000. Vatican website.
[http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_faith_en.html]
- [391] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, loc. cit., p. 15.
- [392] Esther 3:1.
- [393] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: #185-#212.
- [394] Gen. 36: 1-43; Jer. 49: 7-8.
- [395] Exod.17: 14-16.
- [396] Abdias 1.
- [397] Abdias 17.
- [398] Abdias 6.
- [399] Esther 16:11.
- [400] Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (On the Christian Education of Youth, December 31, 1929): para.3.
- [401] Gen. 34: 13-31; Jud. 9:1-5; 1 Sam. 18: 17-19; Dan. 6:1-8.
- [402] Lk. 6:16.
- [403] 2 Tim. 3:4.
- [404] Pope St. Pius X, op cit., para: 3.
- [405] Jurgens, op.cit; p.59.

- [406] Culleton, op. cit. p. 6.
- [407] Culleton, loc. cit., pp. 8-9.
- [408] Esther 11: 5-12.
- [409] Esth. 10: 6-12.
- [410] Cant. 4:12.
- [411] Prov. 14: 27; Prov. 16:22; Prov. 18: 4, Jer. 2:13; Cant. 4:12.
- [412] Ps. 1:3; Ps. 124:4; Isa. 32: 1, 2; Isa. 33:21; Jn. 7: 38,39; Apoc. 22: 4-5.
- [413] Ps. 19: 4-7; Mt. 17:2; Mt. 13:43.
- [414] Esther 11: 5-12.
- [415] Apoc. 11: 19.
- [416] St. Augustine. *The City of God*. "Excerpts on the Two Cities." *Medieval Sourcebook* website.
[<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aug-city2.html>]
- [417] Esther 4: 15-17.
- [418] Esther 14: 6-9.
- [419] Esther 16: 3-16.
- [420] Kramer, Fr. Paul. *The Devil's Final Battle*. [Terryville, CT: The Missionary Association. Copyright Good Counsel Publications, 2002]: pp. 33, 100. Fr. Kramer notes the testimony of "Cardinal Mario Luigi Ciappi, who was nothing less than Pope John Paul II's own personal papal theologian. In a personal communication to a Professor Baumgartner in Salzburg, Cardinal Ciappi revealed that 'In the Third Secret it is foretold, among other things, that the great apostasy in the Church will begin at the top.'"
- [421] Fellows, Mark. *Fatima in Twilight*. [Niagara Falls, U.S. and Canada: Marmion Publications, 2003]: p. 295.

PART 12

FATIMA AND THE GREAT *ET CETERA*: TRACES OF THE THIRD SECRET MESSAGE

- [422] Bertone, Cardinal Tarcisio (with Giuseppe De Carli). *The Last Secret of Fatima*. [New York: Doubleday, English translation copyright 2008]: p.162.
- [423] *The Message of Fatima* (English edition). Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. [Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2000]: p. 43.
- [424] Oestereich, Thomas. "Pope St. Boniface IV." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907]
[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02660c.htm>]

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[http://www.santamariadegliangeliroma.it/paginamastersing.html?codice_url=antiquity_to_present&ramo_home=Basilica&lingua=INGLESE]

[426] Loc cit., “Basilica”

[http://www.santamariadegliangeliroma.it/paginamastersing.html?codice_url=basilica&lingua=INGLESE&ramo_home=Basilica]

[427] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. 1. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2003]: p. 123.

[428] *The Message of Fatima*, as issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 26, 2000. Vatican website.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_fatima_en.html]

[429] Ibid.

[430] Loughlin, James. “Pope Clement XI.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908]

[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04029a.htm>]

[431] “Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri,” Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Maria_degli_Angeli_e_dei_Martiri]

[432] In January, 1972, CUT, replacing Greenwich Mean Time, introduced a “leap second” at irregular intervals, in which one minute becomes 61 seconds, to compensate for the earth’s slowing rotation. “Coordinated Universal Time,” Wikipedia.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coordinated_Universal_Time]

[433] “Science with the Clementine Gnomon.” *The Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels and the Martyrs Official Website*

[http://www.santamariadegliangeliroma.it/paginamastersing.html?codice_url=science_with&ramo_home=La_Meridiana&lingua=INGLESE]

[434] Laux, M.A., Fr. John. *Church History*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, republished from 1930 original text]: p. 486.

[435] Please again refer to **Part 10** of this book, “[Hidden Revelations: The Star of Esther and the Secrets of Fatima](#).”

[436] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 332.

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[438] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 9.

- [439] O'Laverty, B.A., Fr. Hugh. *The Mother of God and Her Glorious Feasts*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers. First published between 1908-1915; republished by TAN in 1987]: p. 125.
- [440] Ferrara, Christopher. *The Secret Still Hidden*. [Pound Ridge, NY: Good Counsel Publications, 2008]: p. 11.
- [441] 1 Thess. 5: 20-23.
- [442] De Marchi, I. M.C., John. *Fatima from the Beginning*. [Missões Consolata, Fátima, 1986]: p. 227.
- [443] Ferrara, op. cit., p. 14.
- [444] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: The Secret and the Church*, Vol II. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2003: p. 265.
- [445] Bacchiarello, S.D.B, Fr. J. *Forty Dreams of St. John Bosco, the Apostle of Youth*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1996. With Nihil Obstat from E. Gutierrez, S.D.B., August 21, 1969 and Imprimatur by Stephan Ferrando, S.D.B., D.D., September 21, 1969]: pp. 205-211.
- [446] *The Message of Fatima*, Ibid.
- [447] Culleton, Rev. R. Gerald. *The Prophets and Our Times*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1974; originally published by the author in 1941 and 1943]: p. 216.
- [448] These words call to mind those of Our Lady of Akita on Oct. 13, 1973: "As I told you, if men do not repent and better themselves, the Father will inflict a terrible punishment on all humanity. It will be a punishment greater than the deluge, such as one never seen before. *Fire will fall from the sky and will wipe out a great part of humanity, the good as well as the bad, sparing neither priests nor faithful. The survivors will find themselves so desolate that they will envy the dead.*" The Akita apparitions were approved by Bishop Ito as authentic.
- [449] *Stimme Des Glaubens* (Voice of Faith), October 1981.
- [450] *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 12, 1982 edition.
- [451] Des Anges, (Frère) Francois de Mari. *Fatima: Intimate Joy World Event, Book IV: Fatima: Tragedy and Triumph*. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1994]: pp. 167-168.
- [452] Ibid., March 26, 1984 edition.
- [453] *Jesus Magazine*, November 11, 1984 issue, p. 79.
- [454] *Il Sabato*, Rome, March 17, 1990, cited in Ferrara, p. 42.
- [455] Miguel, Aura. *Totus Tuus: Il Segreto di Fatima nel Pontificato de*

Giovanni Paolo II [Itaca: Castel Bolognese, 2003]: p. 137, cited in Ferrara, p. 43.

[456] English translation by the author (M. Bartold) from the original Italian article by Gian Guido Vecchi, “Le Parole del papa: <<*Nonostante la famoso nuvola siami qui...>>,”* *Corriere della Sera*, May 11, 2010.

[457] Alonso, Fr. Joaquin. *La verdad sobre el Secreto de Fátima*, p. 61; see also *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. III, p. 684, cited in Ferrara, p. 19.

[458] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., pp. 749-750.

[459] Pope Innocent III, Fourth Lateran Council, 1215; Pope Boniface VIII, the bull *Unam Sanctam*, 1302; Pope Eugene IV, the bull *Cantate Domino*, 1442.

[460] Socci, Antonio. *Il Quarto Segreto di Fatima* (The Fourth Secret of Fatima), p. 82, cited in Ferrara, op. cit., p. 223.

[461] 2 Thess 2:3.

[462] Vennari, John. “A Colossal Monument to Diabolic Disorientation.” *Catholic Family News*, November 2007.

[463] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, loc. cit.

[464] Pope St. Pius X, *E Supremi* (On the Restoration of All Things in Christ, October 4, 1903): para. 14.

[465] Chautard, O.C.S.O., Dom Jean-Baptiste. *The Soul of the Apostolate*. [Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1961]: p.17.

PART 13

OUR LADY OF AKITA

AND THE THIRD SECRET OF FATIMA

[466] *Catholic World News*, October 11, 2001. In 1998, Howard Dee, the former Philippine ambassador to the Vatican, revealed that “Bishop Ito was certain Akita was an extension of Fatima, and Cardinal Ratzinger personally confirmed to me that these two messages are essentially the same.”

[467] Fellows, Mark. *Fatima in Twilight*. [Niagara Falls, U.S. and Canada: Marmion Publications, 2003]: p. 295.

[468] Alonso, Fr. Joaquin. *La verdad sobre el Secreto de Fatima*, pp. 110-112. Cited in Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. III. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2001]: p. 503.

[469] Ibid., p. 508.

[470] Ibid., p. 504.

- [471] Ibid., p. 505. [Emphasis added.]
- [472] Ibid., p. 505. [Emphasis added.]
- [473] Ibid., pp. 503-505. [Emphasis added.]
- [474] Ibid., p. 506. [Emphasis added.]
- [475] *Jesus Magazine*, November 11, 1984 issue, p. 79. [Emphasis added.]
- [476] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., pp. 507-508.
- [477] Holweck, Frederick. "Feast of the Most Pure Heart of Mary." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911.]
- [<http://home.newadvent.org/cathen/10600a.htm>]
- [478] Agência Nacional de Informação.
- [479] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 578.
- [480] Ibid., p. 509.
- [481] Ferrara, Christopher. *The Secret Still Hidden*. [Pound Ridge, NY: Good Counsel Publications, 2008]: p. 35.
- [482] Pope Paul VI, June 29, 1972 (Feast of St. Peter and Paul).
- [483] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., p. 778. Bishop Venancio's pastoral letter stated, "Fatima has not yet said its last word...Neither has Fatima come to give reason to the prophets of imaginary world catastrophes. Fatima cannot be reduced to sensational prophecies of frightful wars...We affirm that Fatima is something much more serious than all that. Fatima, really, in this too, 'actualizes' the whole evangelical meaning of a Church launched eschatologically towards a future which is, to be sure, most assuredly in God's hands, but which, however, is continually threatened by the mystery of iniquity 'which is already at work.'" (II Thess. 2, 7).
- [484] Alonso, op. cit., p. 70. Cited in Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. III, p. 687.
- [485] Alonso, Fr. Joaquin. *The Secret of Fatima: Fact and Legend*. Cited in Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. III, p. 705.
- [486] "Sr. Agnes Sasagawa," EWTN Online
[<http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/AKITA.HTM>]
- [487] "Our Lady of Akita," Holy Mother Mary website.
[<http://www.holymothermary.org/apparitions/akita.htm>]
- [488] Ibid.
- [489] "A Terrible Warning: The Message of Our Lady of Akita (1973-1981)." Our Lady of the Rosary Library.

[<http://www.olrl.org/prophecy/akita.shtml>]

[490] “Our Lady of Akita,” Ibid.

[<http://www.holymothermary.org/apparitions/akita.htm>]

[491] The Message of Fatima, as issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 26, 2000. Vatican website.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_fatima_en.html]

[492] “Our Lady of Akita,” loc.cit.

[493] *Stimme Des Glaubin* (Voice of Faith), October 1981.

[494] Lk. 21:25-26.

[495] Apoc. 8: 8-11.

[496] Dupont, Yves. *Catholic Prophecy: The Coming Chastisement*.

[Rockford IL, TAN Books and Publishers, 1973]: pp. 16-17.

[497] Ibid., p. 108.

[498] Eccles. 42:19.

[499] Online Etymology Dictionary. See Myrrh: O.E. myrre, from L.

[<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=m&p=26>]

[500] Fellows, Mark. *Fatima in Twilight*. [Niagara Falls, U.S. and Canada: Marmion Publications, 2003]: p. 295.

[501] *The Message of Fatima*, Ibid.

[502] “Our Lady of Akita,” loc. cit.

[503] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinite, op. cit., p. 364.

[504] Culleton, Rev. R . Gerald. *The Reign of Antichrist: A Sourcebook of Catholic Prophecies About “The Man of Sin.”* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1974; originally issued in 1951]: pp. 6-7.

[505] Ps. 19:4-7; Matt. 17:2; Matt. 13:43.

[506] “Our Lady of Akita,” loc. cit.

[507] Prayer of St. Ambrose.

PART 14

WHEN POPE BENEDICT XVI REVEALED:

THE THIRD SECRET IS SPOKEN

[508] Bartold, Marianna. “Pope Benedict on the Third Secret: ‘It is Spoken,’” *Keeping It Catholic–The Blog!*, May 27, 2010.

[<http://keepingitcatholic.blogspot.com/2010/05/pope-benedict-on-third-secret-it-is.html>]

[509] Allen, Jr., John L. “On the Crisis, Benedict Changes the Tone.”

National Catholic Reporter website May 11, 2010.

[<http://ncronline.org/blogs/examining-crisis/crisis-benedict-xvi-changes-tone>]

[510] Vecchi, Gian Guido. “Le Parole del papa: ‘*Nonostante la famosa nuvola siami qui...*’”. *Corriere della Sera*, May 11, 2010 issue.

[511] Please note that, in order to make better sense of the exact English-language translation, bracketed words or phrases in my translation indicate either an alternative meaning of the preceding word or phrase, or a necessary grammatical English structure not explicitly expressed in the original Italian.

[512] English translation by the author (M. Bartold) from the original Italian article by Gian Guido Vecchi, “Le Parole del papa: <<*Nonostante la famoso nuvola siami qui...>>*,” *Corriere della Sera*, May 11, 2010. [Emphasis added] The original inquiry, in Italian, was phrased as follows: “Santità, quali significato hanno oggi per noi le apparizioni di Fatima? E quando lei presentò il testo del Terzo segreto, nella stampa vaticana, nel giugno 2000, le fu chiesto se il messaggio poteva essere esteso, al di là dell’attentato a Giovanni Paolo II, anche alle altre sofferenze dei papi. È possibile secondo lei, inquadrare anche in quella visione le sofferenze della Chiesa di oggi per i peccati degli abusi sessuali sui minori?”

[513] English translation by the author (M. Bartold) from the original Italian article by Gian Guido Vecchi, loc. cit. Pope Benedict’s original response, in Italian, was phrased as follows: “Oltre questa grande visione della sofferenza del Papa, che possiamo in sostanza riferire a Giovanni Paolo II sono indicate realtà del futuro della Chiesa che man mano si sviluppano e si mostrano. Cioè è vero che oltre il momento indicato nella visione, si parla, si vede la necessità di una passione della Chiesa, che naturalmente si riflette nella persona del Papa, ma il Papa sta nella Chiesa e quindi sono sofferenze della Chiesa che si annunciano.”

[514] Vennari, John. “Pope Resurrects Third Secret.” Posted on *Catholic Family News* website, May 19, 2010, and subsequently published in the June issue of *Catholic Family News*. [Emphasis added.]

[<http://www.cfnews.org/b16-3rd-sec.htm>]

[515] Pope Pius X, “Pascendi Dominici Gregis” (On the Doctrines of the Modernists, September 8, 1907): para. 3.

[516] “The Message of Fatima,” as issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 26, 2000.

[517] Cardinal Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI, was interviewed by Vittorio Messori on August 15, 1984. It was on this date that he disclosed

that he had indeed read the Third Secret, although he never stated **when** he read it, so he may have known of its contents a number of years before the 1984 interview. The August 1984 interview was later published in *Jesus* magazine, November 1984, p. 79.

[518] “The Message of Fatima,” loc. cit.

[519] Socci, Antonio. *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*. [Loreto Publications: Fitzwilliam, NH, 2009]: p. 33.

[520] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima, The Secret and the Church*, Vol. II. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation copyright 1989]: pp. 281-282.

[521] Walsh, William Thomas. *Our Lady of Fatima* [Image Book published by Doubleday: May 1990, reprinted from the first Image edition published in 1954 by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company.]: p. 221. [Emphasis added.]

[522] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words: Sister Lucia’s Memoirs* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: p. 165.

[523] Pope Pius X, loc. cit., para. 1.

[524] The details of these events are fully documented in the monumental works of Frère Michel, *The Whole Truth about Fatima, Volumes I, II, and III*. One particular example of Bishop de Silva’s refusal is found in *Vol. II, The Secret and the Church* [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised Edition 2001]: p. 40.

[525] Matt. 16:18.

[526] Fenton, Msgr. Joseph Clifford. “The Meaning of the Name ‘Church.’” *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, Vol. CXXXI, No. 4, October 1954: p. 272.

[527] Ps. 126:1.

[528] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: The Third Secret*, Vol. III. [Buffalo: New York, Revised edition published 2001]: p. 710. [Emphasis added.]

[529] Ibid.

[530] Loc. cit., p. 351, footnote 39.

[531] Ratzinger, Cardinal Joseph as quoted by Vittorio Messori, “Here is Why the Faith is in Crisis,” *Jesus Magazine*, November 11, 1984: p. 79. [Emphasis added.]

[532] Lk. 21: 6-11. [Emphasis added.]

[533] Apoc. 1:11.

[534] *Catholic World News*, October 11, 2001. Howard Dee, the former Philippine ambassador to the Vatican, revealed in 1998 that “Bishop Ito was certain Akita was an extension of Fatima, and Cardinal Ratzinger personally confirmed to me that these two messages are essentially the same.”

[535] *Pope: we would be mistaken to think that Fatima’s prophetic message is complete*, Asia News, May 13, 2010.

[<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pope:-we-would-be-mistaken-to-think-that-Fatima%C3%A2%E2%82%AC%E2%84%A2s-prophetic-mission-is-complete-18398.html>]

[536] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: p. 34.

[537] St. Louis-Marie de Montfort was canonized on July 20, 1947 by Pope Pius XII.

[538] Pope Pius XII, A.A.S., 39, 413.

[539] *Museo San Pio X* website.

[<http://www.museosanpiox.it/>]

[540] From editor’s brief introductory chapter, “About True Devotion to Mary,” added to St. Louis de Montfort, op. cit., p. xiii.

[541] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words: Sister Lucia’s Memoirs* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: p. 163.

[542] Pope St. Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (On the Doctrines of the Modernists, Sept. 8, 1907).

[543] *The Message of Fatima* (English edition). Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. [Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2000]: p. 43.

[544] Fr. Faber in St. Louis de Montfort, loc. cit., *Preface*, p. xix.

[545] From editor’s brief introductory chapter entitled “About True Devotion to Mary,” added to St. Louis de Montfort, *Ibid.*, p. xx.

[546] See Antonio Socci, *The Fourth Secret of Fatima* and Christopher Ferrara, *The Secret Still Hidden*.

[547] From editor’s brief introductory chapter entitled “About True Devotion to Mary,” added to St. Louis de Montfort, loc. cit., p. xx.

[548] From editor’s brief introductory chapter entitled “About True Devotion

to Mary,” added to St. Louis de Montfort, loc. cit., p. xii.

[549] Brother François de Marie des Anges of the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart. *The Whole Truth of Fatima*, Vol. IV.

[<http://www.catholicvoice.co.uk/fatima4/>] On May 17, 1960, the “Bishop of Leiria, Msgr. Joao Venancio, launched an appeal to all the bishops of the world, inviting them to organise [sic] days of prayer and penance on October 12 and 13, in union with the pilgrims to the Cova da Iria, in a spirit of reparation and consecration to the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary... About three hundred bishops responded to his appeal. This was scarcely fifteen per cent of the world episcopate. Nevertheless their letters indicated that, in numerous countries, people would be uniting themselves with the ardent supplications of the pilgrims in Fatima.”

[550] de Montfort, op. cit., p. 11.

[551] Ibid., p. 14.

[552] Ibid., p. 21.

[553] Ibid., p. 25.

[554] St. Bernard, cited by St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*. [Brooklyn, NY: The Redemptorist Fathers, 1931], p. 73.

[555] de Montfort, op. cit., p. 28.

[556] Ibid., p. 29.

[557] Ibid., p. 30.

[558] Ibid.

[559] Ibid., all quotes from this point are found on pp. 32-35.

[560] de Montfort, Ibid., p. 35.

PART 15

FATIMA’S FOREMOST REQUEST

[561] “Imagem de Nossa Senhora de Fátima será levada à Jornada Mariana a pedido do Papa,” Santuário de Fátima website.

[<http://www.santuario-fatima.pt/portal/index.php?id=66425>; English translation posted on the Rorate Caeli blog, “In October, at the Vatican, Pope Francis will consecrate the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2013/08/in-october-at-vatican-pope-francis-will.html>]

[562] “Pope Francis to Consecrate the World to Mary’s Immaculate Heart.” Catholic News Agency.

[<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-francis-to-consecrate-the-world->

to-marys-immaculate-heart#ixzz2f2YIGp80]

[563] “Santa Messa Celebrata Dal Santo Padre Francesco Per La ‘Giornata Mariana’ in Occasione dell’Anna Della Fede.” *News. VA*, Official Vatican Network.

[<http://www.news.va/it/news/151094>]

[564] Bertone, Cardinal Tarcisio, with De Carli, Guiseppe. *The Last Secret of Fatima*. [New York: Doubleday, English translation copyright 2008.

Originally published in Italy as *L’Ultima veggente di Fatima* by RCS Libri S.p.A., Milan, in 2007. Copyright 2007 by RCS Libri S. p A., Milano. This edition published by arrangement with RCS Libri S.p.A.]: p. 83.

[565] *Pope: we would be mistaken to think that Fatima’s prophetic message is complete*, Asia News, May 13, 2010.

[<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pope:-we-would-be-mistaken-to-think-that-Fatima%C3%A2%E2%82%AC%E2%84%A2s-prophetic-mission-is-complete-18398.html>]

[566] Pope Pius XII, Radio Message to Fatima, May 13, 1946, Bendito seia, AAS 38.266. [Emphasis added]

[567] Joyce, George. “The Pope.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911]

[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm>].

[568] Joyce, Ibid. [Emphasis added.]

[569] Van Hove, Alphons. “Bishop.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907]

[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02581b.htm>]

[570] Schulte, Augustin Joseph. “Consecration.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. [Vol. 4. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908]

[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04276a.htm>]. [Emphasis added.]

[571] Sharkey, Don. *The Woman Shall Conquer*. [Kenosha, WI: Prow Books/Franciscan Marytown Press, revised 1976]: Backcover.

[572] Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Fellowship of the Ring*. [New York: Ballantine Books, published by arrangement with the Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982]: p.323.

[573] Pope Pius IX, bulla *Ineffabilis Deus* (The Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1854). Cited by Pope Pius XII, *Ad Caeli Reginum* (On Proclaiming the Queenship of Mary, Oct. 11, 1954): para. 50. [Emphasis added.]

[574] “Our Lady of Akita,” Holy Mother Mary website.

[<http://www.holymothermary.org/apparitions/akita.htm>]

[575] Blessed Pius IX, *Ibid.*, para. 42.

[576] Pope Leo XIII, *Adiutricem* (On the Rosary. Sept. 5, 1895), para. 11.

[577] Pope Pius XII, *Ingruentium Malorum* (On Reciting the Rosary, Sept. 15, 1951), para. 6.

[578] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *Le glorie de Maria (The Glories of Mary)*, p. I, c. I, §1. Cited by Blessed Pius IX, *Ad Caeli Reginum*, para. 25.

[579] Pope Pius XII, *Ad Caeli Reginum* (On Proclaiming the Queenship of Mary, Oct. 11, 1954): para. 51.

[580] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2003]: pp. 182-183.

[581] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[582] Eudes, St. John. *The Admirable Heart of Mary*. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, under license from Loreto Publications, Fitzwilliam, NH]: p.101.

[583] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. II. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2003]: pp. 543.

[584] Culleton, Rev. R. Gerald. *The Prophets and Our Times* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1974. Originally published by the author in 1941 and 1943]: p. 151.

[585] Apoc. 12:1.

[586] de Montfort, St. Louis. *The Secret of Mary*. [Bay Shore, NY: Montfort Publications, Revised Edition, 1993. With Imprimi potest, Nihil Obstat, and Imprimatur, June 1947]: p. 35.

[587] Eudes, op. cit., p. 42.

[588] St. Ambrose, cited in *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*. [<http://books.google.com/books?id=MCX6nTwu8U8C>].

Also see SS. Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Mission.

[http://www.saintspeterandpaulrcm.com/weekly_bulletin.htm] [Emphasis added.]

[589] Pope St. Pius X. *Discourse on the Beatification of St. Joan of Arc*. Cited by Rev. Denis Fahey, C.S. SP., B.A., D. PH., D.D., *The Kingship of Christ: According to the Principles of St. Thomas Aquinas* [Palmdale, CA: Christian Book Club of America, 1990 republication. First published in 1931.]: p.164.

PART 16
THE AGE OF MARY
AND THE
LOST MEANING OF CONVERSION

- [590] Sharkey, Don. *The Woman Shall Conquer*. [Kenosha, WI: Prow Books/Franciscan Marytown Press, 1976]: p. 5.
- [591] Guldner, Benedict. "Conversion." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908]
- [592] Chautard, O.C.S.O., Dom Jean-Baptiste. *The Soul of the Apostolate*. [Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1961]: p. 34.
- [593] Garrigou-Lagrange, Fr. Reginald. *The Three Conversions in the Spiritual Life* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1977. Reprinted from the original; copyright 1938 by Burnes Oates & Washbourne Ltd.]: p. 1.
- [594] Garrigou-Lagrange, Fr. Reginald. *The Three Ages of the Interior Life, Volume Two* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers. Reprinted from the original; copyright 1948 by B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis and London]: p. 21.
- [595] Lagrange, op. cit., p. 15.
- [596] Ibid., p. 16.
- [597] Ibid., p. 17.
- [598] Chautard, op. cit., p. 28.
- [599] Ibid., p. 42.
- [600] de Montfort, St. Louis Marie. *The Secret of Mary*. [Bay Shore, NY: Montfort Publications, Revised Edition 1993]: p.11.
- [601] Eudes, St. John. *The Admirable Heart of Mary*. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, under license from Loreto Publications, Fitzwilliam, NH]: p. 3.
- [602] 1 Cor. 12, 27; Eph. 5, 30. Cited by St. John Eudes, Ibid.
- [603] Eudes, loc.cit.
- [604] Ibid., p. 4.
- [605] St. Bonaventure notes this law, which refers to the way God provided Divine Revelation to make ready the human race for His "undoing of the awful consequences of Original Sin, taken in conjunction with man's response to God's overtures." Also see Smith, D.D., Ph.D., Canon George D. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Vol. I [New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959]: p.115.
- [606] Jer. 31:22.

- [607] Eudes, loc. cit., p. 4.
- [608] Ibid., p. 5.
- [609] 2 Cor. 4, 15.
- [610] Eudes, St. John. *The Admirable Heart of Mary*. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, under license from Loreto Publications, Fitzwilliam, NH]: p. 80.
- [611] Chandlery, S.J., P.J. *Mary's Praise on Every Tongue*. [London: Manresa Press, 1919]. Archived at <https://archive.org/details/maryspraise00chanuoft>
- [612] St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*. [Brooklyn, NY: The Redemptorist Fathers, 1931]: p. 287.
- [613] Smith, D.D., Ph.D., Canon George D. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Vol. I. [New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959]: p.526.
- [614] de Liguori, loc.cit.
- [615] Aquinas, St. Thomas. *The Summa Theologica*. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. First Part of the Second Part, Question 85.
- [616] de Liguori, loc.cit.
- [617] 1 Cor. 15: 44-49.
- [618] Rom. 5:14,17.
- [619] Smith, op.cit., p. 523.
- [620] St. Ephrem, *Op. Syr., tom.ii*, p. 325. Cited by Canon Smith, op. cit., p. 531.
- [621] Smith, op.cit., p. 524
- [622] Ibid., p. 528. [Emphasis added.].
- [623] de Liguori, op.cit., p. 303.
- [624] Gen. 2:21-22.
- [625] Jn. 1:14.
- [626] St. Bernard, *Sermo de Duodecim praerogativis B.V.M.*, I, 2. Cited by Smith, op.cit., p. 530.
- [627] Ps. 25:8.
- [628] Gen. 3:15.
- [629] Smith, op.cit., p. 526.
- [630] *De Verbo Incarnato*, p. 401 (Rome, 1912). Cited by Smith, op.cit., p. 530.
- [631] O'Laverty, B.A., Fr. H. *The Mother of God and Her Glorious Feasts*. [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1987; republished from the 1908-

1915 edition]: p. 4.

[632] Ibid.

[633] Smith, loc.cit.

[634] Jn. 8:58.

[635] Haer. V.19

[636] Gen. 3:20.

[637] St. Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople (d. 446), *Orat.* 6. Cited by P.J. Chandlery, S.J., op. cit., Section IX.

[638] Lk. 1:38.

[639] The dogma that Mary is *Theotokos*, because Her Son Jesus is one Person but with two natures (divine and human; the hypostatic union), was formally defined at the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.

[640] Lk. 2:7.

[641] Matt. 2:11.

[642] de Montfort, op. cit., #49.

[643] Ibid.

[644] Sharkey, Don. *The Woman Shall Conquer*. [Kenosha, WI: Prow Books/Franciscan Marytown Press, 1976]: pp.16-17.

[645] Ibid., p. 25.

[646] The Seven Sorrows (Dolors) of Mary, once celebrated in the Church twice a year, are symbolized as seven mystical swords piercing the Immaculate Heart. In 1727, the feast day was added to the Roman Calendar on the Friday before Palm Sunday. It was also commemorated on the third Sunday of every September, until 1913 when Pope St. Pius X moved the feast to September 15, immediately following the Feast of the Holy Cross on September 14th, emphasizing the connection between Our Lord's Passion and Our Lady of Sorrows.

[647] Trochu, Abbé Francois. *St. Bernadette Soubirous: 1844-1879*.

[Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985. Translated and adapted by John Joyce, S.J. First published in France under the same title by Librairie Catholique Emmanuel Vitte, Paris, 1954. English edition copyright 1957 by Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London. Published by TAN in arrangement with Longman Group Limited, London. Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur, June 21, 1957]: p. 346.

[648] Ibid.

[649] Morrow, Bishop Louis LaRavoire. *My Catholic Faith: A Manual in Religion*. [Kansas City, MO: Sarto House. Republished from the 1954 edition

by Sarto House, January 2000]: p. 85.

[650] Ibid., p.83.

[651] BENEDICT XIV, De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione, chs. xxxi-xxxviii, in *Opera omnia*, III (Prato, 1840); DEVINE, *Manual of Mystical Theology* (London, 1903); SLATER, *A Manual of Moral Theology* (London, 1908); WILHELM AND SCANNELL, *Manual of Catholic Theology* (London, 1906). Cited by Wilhelm, Joseph. "Heroic Virtue." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 7. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. Accessed June 6, 2014.

[<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07292c.htm>].

[652] Trochu, op cit., p. 17.

[653] "Divine Mysteries: The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance," *Legion of Mary* website.

[<http://www.legionofmarytidewater.com/news/news07/may/divinemysteries.h>

[654] Matt. 5:3.

[655] Trochu, op. cit., p. 36.

[656] Ibid.

[657] Bones were used "for knife handles, toys and ornaments, and when treated, for chemistry. The grease extracted from them was also useful for soap-making." Rag-and-bone man, Wikipedia.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rag-and-bone_man]

[658] Foley, Donal Anthony. *Marian Apparitions, the Bible, and the Modern World*. [Herefordshire, England: Gracewing, 2002. Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur]: p. 159.

[659] Trochu, op. cit., p. 42.

[660] Loc. cit., pp. 42-43.

[661] Loc. cit., p. 44.

[662] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. III. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised Edition 2001]: pp. 507-508.

[663] A fortnight is 15 consecutive days.

[664] Trochu, op. cit., p. 63.

[665] McEachern, Ph.D., Patricia A. *A Holy Life: The Writings of St. Bernadette of Lourdes*. [San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005. Kindle Edition]: Loc. 116.

[666] Foley, op. cit., p. 160.

[667] McEachern, op. cit., Loc. 2354.

[668] Ibid., Loc. 573.

[669] Op. cit., Loc. 284.

[670] Op. cit., Loc. 330.

[671] Op cit., Loc. 542.

[672] Sharkey, op. cit., p. 57.

[673] “The Story of the Pilgrimage.” *Sanctuary of Pontmain* website.

[<http://sanctuaire-pontmain.com/en/1-01.html>]

[674] Sharkey, loc. cit. It will be noted that all direct quotes and pertinent facts about the Pontmain apparition are taken from the same work (pp.57-63), with supplemental information from the *Sanctuary of Pontmain* website at [<http://sanctuaire-pontmain.com/en/index.html>]

[675] A year later, on Candlemas (Feb. 2, 1872), the bishop of Laval confirmed the apparition as supernatural, also approving devotion to *Notre Dame d’Espérance de Pontmain* (Our Lady of Hope of Pontmain). As Sharkey, op. cit, further explains: “The Barbedette barn was converted into an oratory. A great twin-spired church rose on the spot of the apparition, and pilgrims went there in great numbers. As is usual in places where a true apparition from Heaven occurs, cures and conversions took place.”

[676] The Prussians, only a few short miles away, never reached Pontmain. For inexplicable reasons, they turned back. The armistice, a prelude to a peace treaty, was signed on January 27, 1871, exactly ten days after the Pontmain apparition. Paris surrendered the next day, and eventually *The Treaty of Frankfurt* was signed May 19, 1871. France, under Napoleon III, initiated the war with Prussia (Germany) and lost it, paying a heavy indemnity, but the bloodshed was over.

[677] Eudes, op. cit., pp. 73.

[678] Ibid. [Emphasis added.]

[679] Ibid.

[680] Ibid.

[681] Ibid, pp. 73-74.

[682] Ibid.

[683] Ibid.

[684] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. [New York: Ballantine Books, 1982 renewed copyright by Christopher R. Tolkien]: p. 444. Here the author paraphrases a line uttered by the character of Lady Galadriel, the Mary-like figure who gave to Frodo a gift of the Evening Star’s light, saying to him, “*May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go*

out.”

[685] *Mary of Nazareth* website.

[<http://www.mariedenazareth.com/7955.0.html?&L=1>]

[686] Faguet, Constance Estelle. *Mary All Merciful—Our Lady of Pellevoisin*. [Outremont near Montreal: Juvenile of the Clerics of St. Viator, ca.1900; Imprimatur 1898]. Edited by the rector of Pellevoisin, Arthème A. Salmon. Contains also the statutes of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Pellevoisin and a Brief of Pope Leo XIII. Main page to access the scanned online book: *Early Canadiana Online*.

[<http://www.canadiana.org/cgi-bin/ECO/mtq?doc=90956>]: p. 6.

[687] Ibid., p. 57.

[688] Ibid., p. 7.

[689] Sharkey, op. cit., p. 66.

[690] Ibid., p. 67.

[691] Faguet, op. cit., pp. 22-51.

[692] Here the term “Mistress” is defined by its archaic form—i.e., as a courtesy title for a lady who is held in high esteem and possesses great authority. Our Lady was stating, in a simple manner, the great regard which Her Divine Son has for her.

[693] Faguet, op. cit., p.60.

[694] August 21 is now also the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

[695] Delaney, John J. *A Woman Clothed with the Sun*. [New York, NY: Image Book published by Doubleday, 1990]: p. 153.

[696] Ibid., p. 149.

[697] Ibid, p.150.

[698] Ibid., p. 161.

[699] Sharkey, op. cit., p.78.

[700] The Knock Shrine Official Website.

[<http://www.knockshrine.ie/witnesses-accounts>]

[701] Sharkey, loc. cit.

[702] Ibid.

[703] The Knock Shrine, Ibid.

[704] Sharkey, loc. cit., p. 79.

[705] Ibid., p. 83.

[706] Ibid., p. 84.

[707] Jn. 19:27.

[708] St. Ambrose, *De Institutione Virginia*, c. ix.

[709] Sharkey, loc. cit. The author believed the book held by St. John was a Mass book, but none of the witnesses made that specific statement. They only said a book; in fact, one account said the letters were written in gold. Therefore, it is also possible that the book held by St. John was the Holy Bible and that he was pointing to the Apocalypse, as the Apparition's symbolism strongly indicates.

[710] Jn. 1:29, 1:36.

[711] Apoc.5:6; 5:8; 5:12; 5:13; 6:1; 6:16; 7:9; 7:10; 7:14; 7:17; 12:11; 13:8; 13:11; 14:1; 14:4; 14:10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7; 19:9; 21:9; 21:14; 21:22; 21:23; 21:27; 22:1; 22:3; 22:14.

[712] Haydock's Catholic Bible Commentary, 1859 edition
[<http://haydock1859.tripod.com/id294.html>]

[713] James, OFM, Rev. Fr. James. "The Story of Knock. The Apparition at Knock, 21st August, 1879." The article was written in 1950 for "Knock Shrine Annual" by the late V. Rev. Fr. James, O.F.M. Cap., M.A., Ph.D., D. Litt., Agrege, Louvain, Professor of Philosophy in University College, Cork. Printed in the Republic of Ireland by FNT-MAYO NEWS. A text edition is archived at

[<http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/KNOCK.HTM>]

[714] Haffert, John M. *Russia will be Converted*. [Washington, NJ: AMI Press, the publishing arm of The Blue Army, 1956]

PART 17

THE DOMINION OF THE KING AND QUEEN

[715] Pope Pius XII, *Radio Message to Fatima*, May 13, 1946, *Bendito seia*, AAS 38.266. [Emphasis added.]

[716] Smith, D.D., Ph.D., Canon George D. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Vol. 1. [New York: The MacMillan Company, 1959]: p. 41.

[717] Herbermann, Charles George. *The Catholic Encyclopedia, an International Work of Reference* [Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1913. Original from the New York Public Library, digitized August 15, 2006]: p. 219.

[<http://books.google.com/books?id=FmgQAAAAIAAJ>]

[718] St. Bonaventure notes this law, which refers to the way God provided

Divine Revelation to make ready the human race for His “undoing of the awful consequences of Original Sin, taken in conjunction with man’s response to God’s overtures.” Also see Smith, D.D., Ph.D., Canon George D. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Vol. I [New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959]: p.115.

[719] Gen 1:26 [Emphasis added.]

[720] Gen. 3: 22 [Emphasis added.]

[721] Gen. 11:7 [Emphasis added.]

[722] Num. 7: 24-26.

[723] Gen. 3:15.

[724] Ibid.

[725] Jn. 8:58 [Emphasis added]

[726] Jn. 1:1.

[727] Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas* (On the Feast of Christ the King, December 11, 1925): para. 7.

[728] Smith, op. cit., p. 63. [Emphasis added.]

[729] Ibid. [Emphasis added.]

[730] Pius XI, Ibid.

[731] Loc cit.

[732] Loc cit. [Emphasis in the original.]

[733] Smith, op. cit., p. 64.

[734] St. Augustine’s Commentary on Ps. CXLIX.

[735] Pope Leo XII, *Annum Sacrum*, cited by Canon George D. Smith in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Vol. 1. [New York: The MacMillan Company, 1959]: p. 64.

[736] Lk. 17:21.

[737] Fahey, op cit., pp. 34-35.

[738] Ibid., p. 88.

[739] Ibid., p. 22.

[740] Ibid., p. 25.

[741] Ibid., p. 23.

[742] 1 Cor. 15: 28.

[743] Jn. 1:14.

[744] Matt. 2: 11.

[745] Lk 2:16.

[746] Duffner, O.P., Fr. Paul A. “The Queenship of Mary.” *The Rosary Light & Life*, Vol. 45, No 4, July-Aug. 1992.

[<http://www.pacifier.com/rosary-center.org/1145n4.htm>]

[747] Apostolic Letter “Inter Sodalicia,” cited by Father Paul A. Duffner in “The Queenship of Mary.”

[748] Pope Pius XI, Allocution to Pilgrims from Vicenza assembled in Rome for the Jubilee of the Redemption, Nov. 30, 1933.

[749] Ibid.

[750] “The Queenship of Mary,” TIME Magazine, November 8, 1954. [<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,857668,00.html>]

[751] Eudes, St. John. *The Admirable Heart of Mary*. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, under license from Loreto Publications, Fitzwilliam, NH]: p. 107.

[752] Ibid., p. 106.

[753] Ibid., p. 3.

[754] Jn. 2:5.

[755] Verheylezoon, S.J., Fr. Louis. *Devotion to the Sacred Heart: Object, Ends, Practice, Motives* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1978]: p. 52.

[756] Eudes, St. John. *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*. [New York, NY: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 1946]: Introduction, xxi.

[757] Migne, Comm. in Cant. Cantico, P.L. 79:499.

[758] Ibid, p. xix.

[759] Ibid.

[760] Cardinal Pie, *Oeuvres Episcopales*, 3, 37.

[761] Eudes, Ibid., op. cit., Introduction, p. xxvii.

[762] Ibid., p. xxiii.

[763] Ibid, pp. 2, 17.

[764] Ibid, p. 35.

[765] Verheylezoon, op. cit., p. 15.

[766] 1 Cor. 6:20.

[767] Jn. 3:16.

[768] Ibid, p. 26.

[769] Ibid., p. 31.

[770] Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Part III, q. 25, art. 1.

[771] Eudes, loc. cit, Introduction, p. xxix.

[772] Pope Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor* (On Reparation to the Sacred Heart, May 8 1928): para. 15.

[773] Ibid.

[774] Sister Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: p. 163. [Emphasis added.]

[775] Jn. 14:23.

[776] Jn. 14:15.

[777] Walz, Rev. M. F. *Why is Thy Apparel Red? Or Glories of the Precious Blood*, [Collegeville, IN: St. Joseph's Printing Office, 1914]: Kindle location 266.

[778] Sr. Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, op. cit., p.156.

[779] Ibid.

[780] Ibid. p. 157.

[781] Walz, op. cit., Kindle location 1490.

[782] Rom. 8:29.

[783] Walz, op. cit., Kindle location 87.

[784] Faber, Fr. Frederick William. *The Precious Blood or the Price of Our Salvation*. [Baltimore, MD: John Murphy and Co., 1860 reprint, 10th American Edition]: Kindle location 470.

[785] Faber, Ibid.

[786] Waltz, op. cit., Kindle location 109.

[787] Sr. Lucia, op. cit., p. 167.

[788] Ibid.

[789] Vianney, St. Jean Marie. Cited by Fr. Waltz, Kindle location 1486.

[790] Faber, op. cit., Kindle location 914.

[791] Waltz, Loc. 334.

[792] Heb. 9:9.

[793] Faber, op. cit., Kindle location 1686, 1688.

[794] Murphy, John F. "The Immaculate Heart" in *Mariology*, Vol. III.

[795] "The Traditional Catholic Liturgy," adapted from *The Liturgical Year* by Abbot Gueranger, *Exaltation of the Holy Cross—September 14*.

[<http://www.salvemariaregina.info/SalveMariaRegina/SMR-161/Exaltation.html>]

[796] Birley, A.R. "St Helena—Discoverer of the True Cross (250-330)."

[http://www.brown.edu/Research/Breaking_Ground/bios/St.%20Helena_Flavi

[797] There are, of course, variations in the legend and some historians today

question every part of its veracity. Consistent in all of them is St. Helen's role in the discovery of the True Cross.

[798] "The Traditional Catholic Liturgy," Ibid.

[799] Meagher, Fr. James L. *How Christ Said the First Mass* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, Copyright 1906 by Christian Press Association Publishing Co., NY. Reprinted several times, beginning in 1975, by Marian Publications, South Bend, IN]: p. 317.

[800] de Oliveira, Prof. Plinio Corrêa. "The Exaltation of the Holy Cross." *Tradition in Action* website.

[http://www.traditioninaction.org/SOD/j194sd_ExaltationCross_9-14.html]

[801] Lk. 2: 26-35.

[802] St. Andrew of Crete. "Triumph and Exaltation of the Holy Cross." *Crossroads Initiative* website.

[http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/237/Triumph_and_Exalta]

The website states: "St. Andrew of Crete shows that the feast of the victory and exaltation of the holy cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was celebrated even in the era of the Early Church Fathers. This excerpt from one of St. Andrew's discourses (Oratio 10 in Exaltatione sanctae crucis: PG 97, 1018-1019, 1022-23) is used in the Roman Catholic Office of Readings on September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The corresponding biblical reading is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (Gal 2:19-3:7-14 and 6:14-16)."

[803] Meagher, op. cit., p. 252.

[804] "The Sign of the Cross-III." *Traditional Catholicism* website.

[<http://traditionalcatholicism83.blogspot.com/2007/05/sign-of-cross-iii.html>]

[805] Morrow, Bishop Louis LaRavoire. *My Catholic Faith: A Manual in Religion*. [Kansas City, MO: Sarto House. Republished from the 1954 edition by Sarto House, January 2000]: p. 377. [Emphasis in the original]

[806] Prayer from the traditional Stations of the Cross.

[807] Walsh, O.P., Rev. Reginald, Editor. *Meditation on the Passion*.

[Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, reprinted February, 1963. Compiled from various sources associated with the nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with an Introduction by Rev. Reginald Walsh, O.P. Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur, Feb. 23, 1922]: p. 3.

[808] Ibid., p. 6.

[809] Ibid., p. 1.

[810] Ibid., p. v, *Introduction*.

- [811] 1 Cor. 2:2.
- [812] Walsh, op. cit., p. 5.
- [813] Ibid., p. 4.
- [814] Ibid, p. 5.
- [815] Ibid, p.6.
- [816] Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The 12 Steps to Holiness and Salvation*. Subtitled *From the Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori*. [Adapted from the German of Rev. Paul Leick by Rev. Cornelius J. Warren, C.S.S.R. Boston, MA: Mission Church Press under the title *The School of Christian Perfection*. Retypeset and published under new title in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1986]: p. 58.
- [817] St. Terese of Avila. *The Interior Castle*. [<http://www.sacredtexts.com/chr/tic/tic24.htm>]: p. 226.
- [818] Jer. 8:18.
- [819] Walsh, op. cit., p. 1.
- [820] Liguori, op. cit., p. 193.
- [821] Loc cit., p. 2.
- [822] *Thoughts of Saint Therese: The Little Flower of Jesus, Carmelite of the Monastery of Lisieux*. [New York: P.J. Kennedy and Sons, 1915. Retypeset in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers]:p. 82.
- [823] Ibid.
- [824] Col 1: 24.
- [825] Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* [November 20, 1946]: para.146.
- [826] Liguori, op. cit., p. 193.
- [827] Walsh, op. cit., p. 2.
- [828] Ibid., p. 3.
- [829] Chautard, O.C.S.O, Dom Jean Baptiste. *The Soul of the Apostolate* [Garden City, NY: Image Books Edition 1961]: p. 228. [Emphasis in the original.]
- [830] Lk. 22: 42.
- [831] Matt 26: 38.
- [832] Matt 26:41.
- [833] Jn. 16: 22.
- [834] "Paul of the Cross." (January 3, 1694–October 18, 1775) Taken from a letter written by St. Paul of the Cross. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Paul_of_the_Cross#An_excerpt_from_a_l]
- [835] Jn. 15:12,14.

- [836] Jn. 15:1.
- [837] Walsh, op. cit., p. v, *Introduction*.
- [838] 1 Jn. 4: 8-10.
- [839] Gal 2: 20.
- [840] Eccles. 29:19.
- [841] Liguori, op. cit., p. 54.
- [842] Lk. 23: 1-15.
- [843] Jn. 19:17.
- [844] Walsh, O.P., Rev. Reginald, Editor. *Meditation on the Passion*.
[Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, reprinted February, 1963. Compiled from various sources associated with the nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with an Introduction by Rev. Reginald Walsh, O.P. Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur, Feb. 23, 1922]: p. 228.
- [845] Matt. 21: 8-10.
- [846] Matt. 21: 15. [Emphasis added.]
- [847] Matt. 21: 28-46.
- [848] Matt. 22:33.
- [849] Matt. 22: 46.
- [850] Matt. 22:18. See also Matt. 23: 13-15, 23, 25, 27, 29.
- [851] Matt. 23: 16, 24
- [852] Matt. 23: 17.
- [853] Matt. 23: 27.
- [854] Matt. 23: 28.
- [855] Matt. 23: 31-32.
- [856] Matt. 23: 33.
- [857] Matt. 26: 3-5.
- [858] Matt. 27: 24.
- [859] Walsh, loc. cit.
- [860] Ibid.
- [861] Lk. 23: 26.
- [862] Walsh., op.cit., p. 231.
- [863] Ibid.
- [864] Ibid., p. 230.
- [865] Mk. 15:32.
- [866] Lk. 23:39.
- [867] Lk. 23:40-43, [Emphasis added.]
- [868] Lk. 23:43, [Emphasis added.]

- [869] Lk. 23:27.
[870] Walsh, op.cit., p. 231.
[871] Lk. 23: 28-31.
[872] Lk. 23: 50-56.
[873] Walsh, loc.cit.
[874] Ibid.

PART 18
SECRETS OF THE DEVOTION
TO THE IMMACULATE HEART

- [875] Schouppe, S.J., Fr. F.X. *Purgatory Explained by the Lives and Legends of the Saints* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1986. Republished from the original 1893 edition]: p. 6.
[876] Ibid., p.7. [Emphasis in the original.]
[877] Ibid.
[878] Ibid., p. 3.
[879] Matt. 5:48
[880] Matt 19: 26.
[881] Ibid.
[882] Schouppe, op cit., p. 4.
[883] Hanna, Edward. "Purgatory." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911]
[884] 2 Mach. 12:46.
[885] 2 Mach. 12:43-45.
[886] Zach. 13:9.
[887] "Sermons for the Feast Days of the Year." *The Sermons of the Curé of Ars* [Long Prairie, MN: The Neumann Press. Republished from the original 1901 edition, 1991]: Part II, p.10.
[888] Matt. 5: 26.
[889] "Sermons for the Feast Days of the Year," op. cit., Part II: p. 11.
[890] Matt. 12: 32.
[891] Morrow, Bishop Louis LaRavoire. *My Catholic Faith: A Manual in Religion*. [Kansas City, MO: Sarto House. Republished from the 1954 edition by Sarto House, January 2000]:p. 151.
[892] 1 Cor. 3: 11-15. [Emphasis added.]
[893] Hanna, loc. cit.
[894] Apoc. 21:4.

[895] Apoc. 21: 27.

[896] St. Augustine of Hippo, cited by William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. 3. [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979]: p. 149.

[897] “Decree Concerning Purgatory.” The Council of Trent, Session XXV (December 4, 1563). Also see Denzinger, “Enchiridion”, #983.

[898] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words: Sr. Lucia’s Memoirs* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: p. 161.

[899] Delaney, John J. (Editor). *A Woman Clothed with the Sun* [New York: Image Edition, published by Doubleday, 1990]: p. 184. [Emphasis added.]

[900] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English translation copyright by the author, 1989]: p. 128.

[901] Lk. 9:23, Matt. 16:24, Mk. 8:34. (paraphrased)

[902] Frère Michel, op. cit., p. 129.

[903] Schouppe, op. cit., Publisher’s Preface, p. xxviii. [Emphasis in the original]

[904] Morrow, op. cit. p. 159.

[905] An indulgence is the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. A plenary indulgence remits all punishment; a partial indulgence remits some part of it. That the Church has the power and authority to grant indulgences is a matter of faith, defined at the Council of Trent, Session XXV, December 4, 1563.

[906] Approval and recommendation signed by M. Cardinal Pahiarca at Lisbon, Portugal, March 4, 1936.

[907] Schouppe, op. cit., Publisher’s Preface, p. xxix.

[908] “Sermons for the Feast Days of the Year,” op. cit., Part II, p. 13. [Emphasis in the original.]

[909] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

[910] Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima, October 13, 1917, as recorded by the visionary Sr. Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Word: Sister Lucia’s Memoirs* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Center, 1976]: p. 173.

[911] Many Catholics do not know that in an emergency, lay people (Catholic or not) may baptize another with regular water (if holy water is not available), as long as the one baptizing shares the Church’s intent to baptize, the water is poured over the recipient’s forehead, and the proper words are

said as the water is administered, “I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

[912] Frère Michel, *The Whole Truth of Fatima: The Third Secret*, Vol. III. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2001]: pp. 20-21.

[913] Sr. Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, op. cit., p. 163.

[914] Pope Pius XII, *Radio Message to Fatima*, May 13, 1946, *Bendito seia*, AAS 38.266. [Emphasis added.]

[915] Matt. 2:11.

[916] Lk. 2:16.

[917] St. Bonaventure. Cited by Smith, D.D., Ph.D., Canon George D. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Vol. I. [New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959]: p.115.

[918] Sr. Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, loc. cit.

[919] St. Bonaventure, loc. cit.

[920] Murphy, John F. *Mary’s Immaculate Heart—The Meaning of the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. [Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1951]: p. 1.

[921] Herbermann, Charles George. *The Catholic Encyclopedia, an International Work of Reference* [Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1913. Original from the New York Public Library, digitized August 15,2006]: p. 219.

[922] Gen. 1:26 [Emphasis added.]

[923] Gen. 3:22 [Emphasis added.]

[924] Gen. 11:17 [Emphasis added.]

[925] Num. 6: 24-26.

[926] Mk. 3:17.(The other son of thunder is St. James, the brother of St. John, who was the first Apostle to die as a martyr.)

[927] Butler, Rev. Alban. “December 27, St. John the Apostle and Evangelist.” *The Lives of the Saints, Vol. XII: December*. Published in 1866. Digitized at Bartleby.com, Great Books Online
[<http://www.bartleby.com/210/12/271.html>]

[928] Jn. 13: 23; Jn. 19:26: Jn. 20:2; Jn. 21:7: Jn. 21: 20.

[929] Jn. 19: 26-27.

[930] Jn. 19:27-28. [Emphasis added.]

[931] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary* [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers, Fourth Reprint Revised, 1931]: pp. 25-26.

[932] Deut. 29:29.

[933] Thess. 2:2:14.

[934] de Montfort, St. Louis Marie. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985, from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat, and Imprimatur*, 1949): #49.

[935] Mk. 13: 22.

[936] Matt. 24:24. [Emphasis added]

[937] Eph. 6:11. [Emphasis added]

[938] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat, and Imprimatur*, 1949]: *Father Faber's Preface*, pp. xix-xxiii.

Father Faber's Preface

[939] On May 12, 1854, Rome decreed that the writings of St. Louis de Montfort were free from all error which could bar his canonization, so that by 1862, Fr. Faber first translated *True Devotion* from the original French into English.

[940] Faber, Ibid. [Emphasis in the original.]

[941] St. Bonaventure. Cited by Smith, D.D., Ph.D., Canon George D. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Vol. I [New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959]: p.115.

[942] Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., Fr. R. *The Mother of the Savior and our Interior Life* [Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1993. Reprinted from 1948 edition by B. Herder Book Company, St. Louis, Missouri]: pp. 130-131.

[943] Pius XII, "Urbis et Orbis," AAS, XXXVII, 1945, p. 50.

[944] St. Ambrose, *Commentarius in Cantica Cantic*. (PL, 15, 1919); see also St. Gregory the Great, *Super Cantica Canticorum Expositio* (PL, 79, 517 and 541). Cited by John Murphy, *Mary's Immaculate Heart—The Meaning of the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary* [Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1951]: p. 3.

[945] St. Isidore of Seville, Appendix VI, *Exposito in Canticum Canticorum* (PL, 83, 1125).

[946] Alanus de Insulis (Alain de l'Isle), Op. cit. (PL, 210, 85). [Emphasis

added.]

[947] Ibid. (PL, 210, 105).

[948] Ibid. (PL, 210, 65).

[949] St. Ambrose, *Expositionis in Lucam*, Lib. II (PL, 15, 1654): “Discamus sanctae Virginis in omnibus castittem, quae, non minus ore pudica quam corpore, arguments fidei conferebat in corde.” St. Gregory Thaumaturgic (Dubius), *Hom. 2 In Annntiat. Virgin Mariae* (PG, 10, 1169-70):

“Sancticissima porro Dei Genetrix conservabat Omnia verba haec, conferens in corde suo; velut quae omnium mysteriorum vas ac receptaculum esset.”

Cited by John Murphy, op. cit.]: p. 8. [Emphasis added.]

[950] Eudes, St. John. *The Admirable Heart of Mary*. [Immaculate Heart Publications: Buffalo, NY. Under license from Loreto Publications, Fitzwilliams, NH]: p. 9. [Bolded word is my emphasis, italics are the saint’s.]

[951] Sharkey, Don. *The Woman Shall Conquer*. [Kenosha, WI: Prow Books/Franciscan Marytown Press, 1976. Third Printing]: pp. 7-8.

[952] Faber, loc. cit. [Emphasis in the original.]

[953] Eudes, St. John. *The Admirable Heart of Mary*. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Reprinted from the 1947 edition. Under license from Loreto Publications, Fitzwilliam, NH]: p. 82.

[954] St. Ambrose, *Expositionis in Lucam*, Lib. II (PL, 15, 1654): “Discamus sanctae Virginis in omnibus castittem, quae, non minus ore pudica quam corpore, arguments fidei conferebat in corde.” St. Gregory Thaumaturgic (Dubius), *Hom. 2 In Annntiat. Virgin Mariae* (PG, 10, 1169-70):

“Sancticissima porro Dei Genetrix conservabat Omnia verba haec, conferens in corde suo; velut quae omnium mysteriorum vas ac receptaculum esset.”

Cited by John Murphy, *Mary’s Immaculate Heart–The Meaning of the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary* [Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1951: p. 8. [Emphasis added.]

[955] de Montfort, St. Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. [Translated from the original French by Fr. Frederick William Faber, D.D. Edited and Annotated by *The Fathers of the Company of Mary*. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1985 from the 1941 copyright edition with *Imprimi Potest, Nihil Obstat*, and *Imprimatur*, 1949]: #6.

[956] Prov.31:28; the commentary of Richard of St. Laurence appears to be a paraphrase of this passage.

[957] “Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” *Messenger of the Sacred*

Heart of Jesus (1876).

[958] Ibid.

[959] St. Anselm. Cited by St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary* [Kindle Edition]: Location 1587.

[960] Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Mother of the Savior and Our Interior Life*. [Charlotte, NC: TAN Books & Publishers, 1993. Republished from the first U.S. publication by B. Herder Book Company, St. Louis, MO, 1948.]: p. 229.

[961] *Mariale*, q. 43, 2. Cited by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, Ibid.

[962] Jn. 5:22-27. Cited by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, Ibid.

[963] Acts 10:42; cf. IIIa., q. 59, a.1. Cited by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, Ibid. [Emphasis added.]

[964] Murphy, John. *Mary's Immaculate Heart—The Meaning of the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary* [Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1951]: p. 83.

[965] *In. Psalt. B. Virgin*, p. 79. Cited by St. John Eudes, op. cit., p. 43.

[966] “Of Mary, there is never enough”—meaning that one could never give enough praise, filial devotion, or explanation of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

[967] Eudes, op. cit., p. 81. [Emphasis in the original.]

[968] Damascene, St. John. Cited by St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, op. cit., Location 614.

[969] de Montfort, op. cit., #76

[970] Garrigou-Lagrange, op. cit., p. 245.

[971] Montfort, loc. cit., #82.3. [Emphasis added.]

[972] “Cult in general means honor paid in a spirit of submission and dependence to a superior because of his excellence...Created persons who have a certain excellence are entitled to the cult called *dulia*: a cult of respect. Thus, in the natural order respect is due to parents, kings, teachers; in the super natural order it is due to the saints, the heroicity of whose virtues has been recognized. The latter cult paid to God’s servants honors God Himself who is revealed to the world in the saints and draws us by them to Himself. It is commonly taught in the Church that the Blessed Virgin is entitled to a cult of *hyperdulia*, or supreme *dulia*, because of her eminent dignity as Mother of God.” Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, op. cit., pp. 240-241. [Second emphasis in this definition added.]

[973] Garrigou-Lagrange, Ibid., pp. 243-244.

[974] Ibid., p. 251.

[975] Ibid., p. 252.

[976] “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those with the greatest need of Thy mercy.” This is the prayer which Our Lady of Fatima instructed to add after every Rosary decade.

[977] Bellarmine, St. Robert. Cited by St. Alphonsus de Liguori in *The Glories of Mary* [The Redemptorist Fathers: Brooklyn, NY, 1931]: p. 88.

[978] Garrigou-Lagrange, loc. cit. pp. 246-247.

[979] Ibid., pp. 247-248.

[980] de Montfort, loc. cit., #47, 48.

[981] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989]: pp. 185-186.

[982] Ibid., p. 187.

[983] Ibid., p.181.

[984] Ibid., p.187.

[985] Sister Mary Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs* [Fatima, Portugal: Postulation Centre, 1976]: p.165.

[986] Ibid., p. 167.

[987] “This was the aurora borealis on the night of January 25-26, 1938, which was unusual, and always regarded by Lucia as the God-given sign which had been promised.” Cited in *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words* by editor Fr. Louis Kondor, SVD: p. 190.

[988] Sister Mary Lucia, loc. cit.

[989] Ibid.

[990] *The Message of Fatima*, as issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Vatican website.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_fatima_en.html]

[991] Lk. 21: 10-11; Matt. 7: 7, 11, 14.

[992] Sr. Mary Lucia, op. cit., pp. 17-168.

[993] Frère Michel, op. cit., footnote 29: p. 212.

[994] Sister Mary Lucia, op. cit., p. 172.

[995] Frère Michel, op. cit., p. 291.

[996] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinite. *The Secret and the Church*, Vol. II.

[Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989]: pp. 770.

[997] Ephes. 1:10.

[998] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

[999] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Way of Salvation and Perfection*.

[Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers, 1926]: p. 254.

[1000] Ibid., p. 42.

[1001] Sr. Mary Lucia, op. cit., p. 163.

[1002] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima*, Vol. III. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised edition 2001]: p. 509.

[1003] Pope St. Pius X (Our Apostolic Mandate on the Sillon, August 25, 1910): para. 11

[1004] Pope Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae* (On Christians as Citizens, January 10, 1890): para. 14.

[1005] Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa*: 2:2:174: Res. et ad 3.

[1006] Cant. 6:9.

[1007] Lk. 9:23.

[1008] Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (Reconstruction of the Social Order, May 15, 1931): para. 144, 146-147.

[1009] Lk. 12:31.

[1010] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, op. cit.: pp. 507-508.

[1011] Quotes from Sr. Lucia come from *A Little Treatise by the Seer on the Nature and Recitation of the Rosary*, a collection of excerpts from Sr. Lucia's letters written between 1969-1971. It was originally published in *Uma vida ao service de Fatima* with an Imprimatur from the Bishop of Leiria, Fatima, Dom Joao Venancio, May 13, 1971.

[1012] *Norms for Indulgences*, 3rd Edition (May 18, 1986): The Other Types of Indulgences Grants, #5.

[1013] Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., Fr. Reginald. *The Three Stages of the Interior Life*, Vol. II. [Copyright 1948 by B. Herder Book Co, St. Louis, MO. Republished in Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1989]: p.165.

[1014] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: Science and the Facts*, Vol. I [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, English Translation Copyright 1989]: p. 181.

[1015] Matt. 21: 22.

[1016] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth about Fatima: The Third Secret*, Vol III. [Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, Revised

edition 2001]: pp. 20-21.

[1017] Mt 22: 36-40.

[1018] Walsh, O.P., Rev. Reginald, Editor. *Meditation on the Passion*.

[Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, reprinted February, 1963. Compiled from various sources associated with the nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with an Introduction by Rev. Reginald Walsh, O.P. Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur, Feb. 23, 1922] p. 17.

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[1021] Garrigou-Lagrange, loc. cit.

[1022] Ibid.

[1023] 2 Cor. 5: 14.

[1024] Phil. 2: 12.

[1025] Gal. 2: 11-14.

[1026] Walsh, op cit., p. 222.

[1027] Mk. 4:11.

[1028] Smith, D.D., Ph.D., Canon George D. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, Vol. 1. [New York: The MacMillan Company, 1959]: p. 538.

[1029] de Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*. Fourth Reprint Revised. [Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers, 1931]: p. 602.

[1030] Gal 6:7.

[1031] Walsh, op. cit., p. 249.

[1032] Lk. 23: 34

[1033] Lk. 23: 43.

[1034] Jn. 19: 26–27.

[1035] Matt. 27: 46.

[1036] Jn. 19: 28.

[1037] Jn. 19: 30.

[1038] Lk. 23: 46.

- [1039] Lk. 2:35.
- [1040] Lk. 1: 38.
- [1041] Lk. 1:32.
- [1042] Eccles. 24:24-25.
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- [1049] Eudes, op. cit., p. 77.
- [1050] *Rosary Crusade Clarion*, June 2001 (Issue 6)
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- [1056] Ibid.
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Guadalupe: **Secrets** of the Image

Marianna Bartold

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All Scriptural quotations were taken from the Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims translation, with revisions and footnotes (in the text in italics) by Bishop Richard Challoner, 1749-52. Taken from a hardcopy of the 1899 Edition by the John Murphy Company. IMPRIMATUR: James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, September 1, 1899.

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Part I
Behold Your Mother:
The One Who Crushes the Serpent

“Call me and my image the Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, *the one who crushes the serpent.*”

—*Our Lady, giving her name in 1531 to Juan Bernardino, uncle of St. Juan Diego*

During the season of Advent almost five hundred years ago, a great sign was given to the Church and the world. This sign still exists and it continues to unfold its wonders. It is a miraculous sign testifying to all mankind that a new age had begun. As the centuries pass, it becomes increasingly apparent that the marvels of the apparitions, the messages, and the Miraculous Image known as Our Lady of Guadalupe are not only for Mexico, or both of the American continents, but for the entire world.

Every Saturday and Sunday, in order to attend the morning Mass and afterward receive catechetical instruction, a 57-year old widower and convert of six years known as Juan Diego (now a canonized saint) arose in the middle of the night and on each of those days walked a round-trip totaling 18 miles and 7 hours. At dawn on Saturday, December 9, 1531 the Mother of God appeared to this most humble and pious man as he reached a hill called Tepeyac, the site of a destroyed Aztec goddess temple, situated on the outer perimeter of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan (today's Mexico City). It was the first recorded Marian apparition in the “new land” of the Americas and of the Modern Age.

The Apparition occurred at daybreak. One can only imagine St. Juan's reaction when he heard beautiful singing from the hillcrest, like fine bird-song. According to the *Nican Mopohua*, the original written account in Nahuatl (the native language of the Aztecs and some Mayans) by Antonio Valeriano (an educated noble Indian who was also proficient in Latin and Spanish), it becomes clear this bird song was supernatural: “When at times their voices quieted, the hillside seemed to echo in response. Their singing, very soft and pleasant, surpassed that of the *coyoltototl* and *tzinizcan* and other fine song birds.” Evidently, there was something unique about this daybreak, since Juan questioned himself, “Could I be worthy of what I am

hearing? Am I dreaming? Am I arising from sleep? Where am I? Perhaps in the earthly paradise of flowers and corn about which our ancestors spoke? Maybe already in heaven?"

The account states that as he looked east, toward the summit, the heavenly singing stopped, and silence fell. Then he heard, from the top of the hill, a voice calling him by his baptismal name, "Juanito, my dearest Juan Diego." (In his own language, the voice used a diminutive which in Spanish is rendered "Juanito." The Virgin called him by his Christian name but Juan's birth name, before he was baptized as a Roman Catholic, was *Cuauhtlatohuac*, meaning "Eagle Who Speaks.")

The *Nican Mopohua* continues: "He then climbed the hill in the direction of the voice, not at all frightened, but rather, feeling extremely happy. Upon reaching the summit, he saw a Lady standing there who told him to come closer. He was filled with awe and admiration by her splendor. Her clothing was radiant like the sun; the crag on which her foot was resting was giving off rays of light, and looked like a bracelet of precious stones; even the earth glistened like the mist of a rainbow. The mesquite bushes, prickly pears, and other lowly herbs and grasses which usually grow there seemed like emeralds, the foliage like fine turquoise, and the branches and thorns like shining gold."

"He bowed before her, hearing her very gentle, polite words which were delivered as to someone very respected. She said, 'Listen, Juan, my dearest and youngest son, where are you going?' He answered, 'My Lady, my Queen and my little Girl, I am going to your house in Mexico-Tlatilolco to continue the study of the divine mysteries taught us by the images of Our Lord, our priests.'" [\[1\]](#)

This scene is already a charming one, and it first must be understood according to Juan's culture. **First**, the beauty of birds in their song and feathers and the beauty of music held specific meanings to those of the Nahuatl culture, for flower and song meant access to (or experience of) the divine truths. **Second**, the Lady lovingly called to Juan in his language, calling him "Juantzin" or "Juandiegotzin" which in Spanish translated to "Juanito" and "Juan Diego." However, in the native Nahuatl language, the ending (-tzin) is used as a sign of reverence and respect, while the ending (-ito) is a diminutive form, commonly used among family and friends. **Third**, the Virgin received him standing, an unexpected surprise since, among the

Aztec, Mayan, and Spaniards, the nobility remained seated when subordinates approached. [2] **Fourth**, Juan immediately recognized this beautiful Lady's identity because he rightly called her "my Lady" and "my Queen," but he also addressed her as "my little Girl," which was a natural response from a man who was clean of heart. He literally saw her as a very young woman, so it was becoming for an older man to cordially and yet tenderly address her as "my little Girl" (also rendered as "my little child").

In this initial Apparition to St. Juan, Our Lady's words are astounding when carefully read. She revealed that she is the Perpetual Virgin, the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church, and the Mediatrix of All Graces:

"Know and be assured, my dearest son, that **I am the Perfect Ever Virgin, Holy Mary, the Mother of the one True God**, of *Ipalnemohuani* [the One through whom all live], of *Teyocoyani* [the Creator of human beings], of *Tloque Nahuaque* [the Lord of nearness and closeness], of *Ilhuicahua Tlaltipaque* [the Lord of Heaven and of Earth]. **I greatly desire that my beloved sacred house should be built here, in order to show Him to you all, to exalt Him**, to present Him to the peoples, He who is all my love, He who is my compassionate gaze, He who is my help, He who is my salvation. Because I am truly honored to be the compassionate Mother of all, both you and all the peoples here in this land, and still others who are my beloved, who call to me, seeking me, those who honor me, trusting in my intercession." [3]

After giving her message, she told St. Juan to "**go to the palace of the Bishop of Mexico**. Tell him I myself send you as my representative to convey to him the great desire I have that he raise up for me in this place a sanctuary. Everything I will tell you, with all the details, you will tell him: all you have seen and heard." [4]

It was not easy for St. Juan to see the Bishop, but he patiently waited to be admitted. Bishop Fray Juan de Zumárraga, for his part, listened to St. Juan's message and said he would carefully think about it. St. Juan hurried back to the Virgin and reported the Bishop's response. In all humility, he then asked Our Lady to send another person, one of importance whom the Bishop would believe. The Lady said she had many servants, but it was Juan himself whom she chose to carry out her requests.

She told him to return to the Bishop the next day, Sunday, and again make the request. This time, the Bishop asked St. Juan for a sign that it really

was the Virgin Mary. Disheartened, Juan Diego made his way back and again met the Virgin. He told her all that occurred. Our Lady instructed Juan to return to the same hill on the next day and she would give him the Bishop's sign. Upon returning to his home, Juan Diego found his uncle, Juan Bernardino, seriously ill and near death. Juan Diego tended to his uncle and then went in search of a doctor, but to no avail. Sometime after nightfall, his uncle asked him to return to Tlatelolco (on the outskirts of Mexico City), there to ask a Catholic priest to come to him, in order to hear his confession and prepare him for death. With a heavy heart, the saint anxiously set out on December 12, in the dark hours before dawn.

St. Juan Diego purposely went around the eastern side of the Tepeyac hill, instead of his usual route on the western side, in order to avoid the Mother of God. He did not want to disappoint her, but he also wished to brook no delay in fulfilling his dying uncle's request for a priest. It was his intention to first see to his uncle's spiritual need, and then he would return to the Lady.

Then the unexpected happened. As Juan approached Tepeyac, the Virgin descended the hill on the western side. Juan bowed before her and explained his actions. In short, she assured him all would be well, and then she instructed him to gather the flowers he would find at the top of Tepeyac hill and bring them to her. Juan already knew that Tepeyac was stony ground where nothing ever grew but weeds, thistles, and growth of similar type. Despite the cold season, when frost killed everything, Juan trusted in the Lady's words. He found blooming and fragrant flowers of all kinds, covered with unusual dew that gleamed like pearls. An accompanying legend states that among all these flowers, there were also Castilian roses (which grew only in Spain); these he also brought to the Virgin. Arranging the flowers herself within his *tilma* (a mantle or cloak), Our Lady instructed him to show them only to the Bishop.

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son..." (Isaiah 7:4) When Juan's *tilma* was opened before the Bishop, perhaps no one was more surprised than the messenger. The miraculous flowers, as it turns out, were not the only sign. On St. Juan's *tilma* was a "living image" of the Maiden who had sent the humble man as her emissary.

Meanwhile, Our Lady had also appeared to Juan Bernardino, the saint's

mortally ill uncle, whom she cured. Bernardino had known nothing of the apparitions, because his prudent nephew had not said a word. Unbeknownst to Bernardino, his nephew had another task to carry out, and Juan was already on his way to the Bishop, carefully carrying a bundle of roses and other flowers. To the unsuspecting Bernardino, the Lady gave him a baffling message for the Bishop: “Call me and my image the Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, *the one (or she) who crushes the serpent.*” Such were the words of the Virgin Mary under her well-known title, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*.

Did She Say “Guadalupe”?

For many years, it was believed the Virgin Mary had said, “Call me and my image the Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mary of *Guadalupe*.” There currently exists a credible assertion that, due to an error of hearing and/or an error of language translation, Bishop Zumárraga thought the last word of Our Lady’s sentence was “Guadalupe,” the name of a famous shrine in the prelate’s native Spain. If, however, the language commentators of the last centuries are correct in believing that the Holy Mother of God did *not* say “Guadalupe,” then what did she say? It seems that the Virgin uttered something that is, in the Catholic sense of the word, of universal scope.

The *Nican Mopohua* records that the Lady Mary instructed Juan Bernardino to tell the Bishop that she and her image were to be called: “*Cenquizla Ichpochtzintli Santa Maria de Guadalupe* (The Perfect Virgin, Holy Mary of Guadalupe)” Intriguing to those who know or study the language of Nahuatl (the native language of Juan Diego, his uncle, and the Aztecs), there are no letters (or sounds) for “g” and “d.” (At their baptisms, Juan and his uncle received Catholic names which, only in Spanish, did include these two letters.)

Did she say “Guadalupe” or something else that sounds like it? This very question was first asked during the Apostolic Proceedings of 1666 by participant Luis Becerra Tanco, considered among the foremost Guadalupan scholars of that era. He concluded that the Virgin Mary used the word “Tequantlaxopeuh” (pronounced as “Tea-quantla-show-pay”), meaning “who saves us from the devourer.” In Spanish, the language of the Bishop, it is rendered “la que pisa la serpiente” (in English, “she who steps on the serpent”). [5] Tanco had a point, but the sounds of the two phrases are not close enough.

In 1895, Professor Marioano Jacobo Rojas of Tepoztlan, Morelos, head of the Department of Nahuatl in the National Museum of Archaeology, History and Ethnography, took up again “the idea that Our Lady had asked that her image be venerated under a Nahuatl title. Rojas proposed the term ‘Coatlaxopeuh’ meaning ‘*The one [feminine form] who crushed the serpent's head.*’ ”[6]

In a word, “It is believed that the name ‘Guadalupe’ came about because of the translation from Nahuatl to Spanish of the words used by the Virgin during the Apparition to Juan Bernardino, the ailing uncle of Juan Diego. It is believed that Our Lady used the Aztecs’ Nahuatl word of *coatlxopeuh* which is pronounced ‘**quatlasupe**’ and which sounds remarkably like the Spanish word ‘Guadalupe.’ **Coa** means serpent, **tl** being the noun ending which can be interpreted as ‘the,’ while *xopeuh* means ‘to crush or stamp out.’ So Our Lady must have called herself the one ‘*who crushes the serpent.*’ ” [7]

In 1955, Helen Behrens, to whom we who speak English owe a great deal because she was among the first to ardently promote Guadalupe among us, offered another consideration. As an authority on the Image who studied the word “Guadalupe,” and assisted by a Nahuatl scholar Byron MacAfee, she published a book entitled, *America’s Treasure: The Virgin Mary de Guadalupe*. In her research, she stated, “Neither Bishop Zumárraga nor any other Spanish prelate has been able to explain why she wished her image to be called *de Guadalupe*. The reason must be that she did not say the phrase at all. She spoke in the native language, and the combination of words she used must have sounded like *de Guadalupe* to the Spaniards.”

Behrens suggested that the Nahuatl “**te** coatlxopeuh” has a similar sound, the “te” part meaning stone. Thus in Behrens’ estimation, the Virgin said something akin to “she who breaks, stamps, or crushes the *stone* serpent.” [8]

Why a *stone* serpent? From the very beginning of her apparitions in Mexico, the words and the very appearance of Mary, as described by St. Juan and as she appears on the tilma, showed her as one more mighty than the most important gods of the Aztecs. The Virgin Mary appeared on the hill of Tepeyac, a desolate place full of boulders, bracken, and weeds. Before the Spanish Catholic conquistadors arrived, Tepeyac had been the site of the temple of the pagan goddess Tonantzin, the “mother god” of the Aztecs. The

“mother god” was portrayed as a head composed of snakes’ heads and with writhing snakes as her garment. In addition to Tonantzin, “Quetzalcoátl, primary god of the Aztecs represented as a stone serpent, had to be appeased by live human sacrifice, sometimes thousands in one day.” [9]

Within a decade of the “Guadalupe” apparitions and the miraculous sign of the Virgin Mary’s holy Image, an enormous number of conversions (an estimated number of seven to ten million people) took place. “Through Aztec eyes and Judeo-Christian tradition, remarkable aspects of Guadalupe emerge and explain the massive conversions. The summit of a high place, even a hill like Tepeyac, represents a point of contact with the divinity. Dawn is the beginning, the start of something new. Song, along with the presence of flowers, was a sign of an imminent divine communication to the Aztecs. St. Juan Diego hears his name called, as did Abraham (Gn. 22:1). Resplendent light is also typical of divine manifestation...” [10]

Whether or not an error in translation took place, these questions have again come to light in the latter part of the Modern Age. Surely the Lord God, Who knows and sees all times, places, and events, knew what would happen. Reason illuminated by Faith tells us that it is very likely Our Lady did say, “the one (or she) who crushes the serpent.” The Miraculous Image itself speaks to people of goodwill. The truth of the latter part of the Woman’s title would be revealed in a time when it was sorely needed.

A Portrait that Speaks a Thousand Words

The Virgin’s message is intended for the entire world, for she identified herself to St. Juan Diego as the Mother of God and the mother of all who seek her. However, in her message to the saint’s uncle which he was instructed to give to the Lord Bishop, the Blessed Mother of God reiterates in one simple sentence the doctrines and dogmas of faith concerning her person.

Consider her instructions to the Bishop; she wishes to be called “The Perfect” (Immaculate Conception) “Virgin Mary” (Perpetual Virginity), “Holy Mother of God” (*Theotokos*, the God-bearer, full of grace and therefore holy), “the one who crushes the serpent” (a reference to *Genesis* 3:15: “I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.”)

In the 1950’s, a man named Coley Taylor, whose study of the Image of Guadalupe resulted in his conversion to the Catholic faith, wrote, “**There is**

another important point: she did not ask Juan Diego to build the church, or simply ask that a church be built in her honor. **She sent him to the Bishop,** to the head of the Church in that land new to Christianity. **She was giving an order to the Catholic Church.”**

In addition, Taylor drew on other sources and succinctly explained the meaning of the Miraculous Image on the St. Juan’s tilma: “To the Mexicans, who then had no written language, but made their historical and literary records in a symbolic picture-writing, her Portrait had much to say. Since she was standing in a nimbus of light, with rays representing those of the sun, she was greater than the sun; she was standing on the new moon, and therefore was greater than the moon; and her robe, like the sky, was sown with stars. All these heavenly bodies had long been worshipped, with a god for each, in their pagan pantheon. The Lady was greater than these, and said she was the Mother of all.”

“Since an Angel was at her feet, she was greater than other heavenly creatures. Yet she was no goddess, for her hands were clasped in prayer. And at her throat was a golden brooch, a circle enclosing a black cross—the Christian symbol on the Spanish banners, on the Christian altars, and set up before their mission churches. Her Portrait and its symbolic teaching, far more than the work of the score of missionary priests and brothers, converted the largely pagan Mexico to the Christian Faith. And its symbolism as picture-writing continues to teach and convert...She speaks for herself to all who come to look at her image.”[\[11\]](#)

Burdened as we may be by sorrow, or worry, or pain, or serious illness, Our Lady assures each one of us as she did St. Juan Diego as he hurried to Mexico City, seeking for his dying uncle’s benefit a Catholic priest: “Do not let your heart be troubled...Do not fear this illness, nor any other form of illness or pain. Am I not here, I who am your Mother? Are you not under my shelter? Are you not held in my arms? Is there anything else you need? Now let nothing else disturb you...” [\[12\]](#)

To the Church hierarchy, she gave her title that they, too, must not forget as they preach the Gospel to all nations:

“Call me and my image the Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, *the one who crushes the serpent.*”

Part II

The Face that Reveals the Heart

“I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and virtue.”

– *Eccles.* 24: 24-25

To this day, the seemingly inexplicable Portrait of the Virgin Mary borne on St. Juan Diego’s *tilma* (mantle) continues to unfold its secrets. Commentators on Guadalupe (a commonly used short-hand form of address for the Image itself), seem to agree that its entire aspect is a synthesis of European and Aztec/Mexican culture. As one book expressed it, “Guadalupe emerged in a society with a huge language gap.” [13] However, the Image of the Woman, with all of the accompanying symbolic imagery, silently expressed to both the pagan meso-American peoples and the Catholic Spaniards its divine origin.

To the Spanish-born Bishop to whom the Image was first revealed, the Portrait was the sign that proved true the identity of the Woman who had sent St. Juan Diego. Initially, Bishop Fray Juan de Zumárraga doubted St. Juan, but the flowers, the Castilian roses and, above all, the Portrait on the *tilma* removed all uncertainties. The extraordinary signs granted to him by God also provided another confirmation. The Virgin’s Image silently consoled and encouraged Bishop Zumárraga, highly alarmed by the increasingly violent clashes between the Spanish conquistadors and the indigenous people.

The Answer to a Bishop’s Prayer

Before St. Juan Diego had even approached him, the Bishop had prayed for the intercession of the Virgin Mary, asking for her assistance in his mission. Among the Catholic missionaries present in South America, not enough of them were yet proficient in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. Although the Catholic Spaniards rescued the Aztecs from daily ritual murder, made in sacrifice to appease false gods, it was not long before the dark side of human nature – pride in the superiority of self or of one’s race – manifested itself against the native peoples.

Not all of the Spanish were guilty, but a few in positions of power took

ruthless advantage. One in particular was Don Nuno de Guzman, who was the head of the First Audience – a group of five administrators appointed as governors in 1528 by King Charles V of Spain. To the meso-Americans, Guzman quickly proved to be vicious and cruel. So deep were his prejudices and so greedy his desires that he did not even consider the native peoples to be human beings. His treatment of them was as savage as the human sacrifices that the other Spanish Catholics rightly deplored. To the native peoples, he offered two choices – abandonment of their villages or slavery. He branded them on their faces; he tortured them; he sold them in exchange for cattle. In addition to these horrors, he controlled everything to such a degree that there was no way for the Spanish to appeal to their king. Nuno de Guzman had set up a blockade between Mexico City and Vera Cruz, the only port by which ships with cargo and letters were sent to Spain. He searched and censored everything, even confiscating the Bishop's letters to the king. In a word, de Guzman was an absolute dictator.

A compilation of the history of the years 1528-1531 states: "To offset the First Audience, the King appointed Franciscan Friar Juan de Zumárraga as the first Bishop of Mexico City and Protector of the Indians in December of 1528. He accomplished much in his 25 years as Bishop, which included the establishment of the first grammar school, library, printing press, and the first college, *Colegio de la Santa Cruz at Tlatelolco*. One of the first teachers at the College was the Franciscan Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, author of the *Florentine Codex*, a study of the Aztec Náhuatl language and culture."

"Bishop Zumárraga spent much of his first year in Mexico objecting to the ruthless treatment of the Indians by de Guzman, who by then had sold 15,000 Indians into slavery. The First Audience applied strict censorship, and forbade both Indians and Spaniards from bringing complaints to the Bishop. The Bishop countered with stern sermons against their use of military force, torture, and the imprisonment of Indians. Finally, in 1529, some Indians secretly smuggled a protest to Bishop Zumárraga concerning the heavy taxes and slave conditions in nearby Puebla. Bishop Zumárraga managed to send a message hidden in a crucifix back to Spain, and de Guzman was recalled. A Second Audience proved judicial to the Indians, but did not arrive in Mexico until 1531."

"However, the Conquistadors and the First Audience had done grave damage to their relationship with the native population. The Indians were fed

up with Spanish occupation, and resentment had reached a flash point. Isolated outbreaks of fights with the Spaniards had become inevitable, and Bishop Zumárraga feared a general insurrection. Such was the setting when the event of Tepeyac took place.”[14]

According to Dan Lynch, National Guardian of the Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, “Bishop Zumárraga prayed for Our Lady to intervene to prevent an uprising, to reconcile the Spanish and the natives and to bring peace. He asked that he would receive roses native to his homeland of Castile, Spain as a sign that his prayer would be answered.” [15] Our Lady literally answered the Bishop’s prayer, but also in a totally unexpected way. In a humble man’s tilma, an array of flowers, including the fresh Castilian roses for which he asked, were delivered to him on December 12, 1531. The roses and other flowers also left a full-color Imprint of Our Lady.

Before and during those dark years, there were a few true conversions (like St. Juan Diego’s). However, the majority of Aztecs tenaciously clung to their pagan gods and it is said that some of them still secretly offered human sacrifice. Others felt their gods had abandoned them. Due to the barbaric actions of some of the conquistadors, there were no mass conversions to the Catholic Faith. The Virgin Mary, whose Image broke the cultural and language barriers, accomplished that.

The Intercession of “the One Who Crushes the Serpent”

For the Bishop, a missionary struggling with a culture once terrorized by a demonic force but also a culture strongly resistant to embracing the Catholic Faith, the Image served as a reaffirmation of Christ’s words to His disciples: “Go forth and teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” [16]

To the Aztecs, it is claimed, the Woman on the tilma was replete with cryptography (hidden or secret writing, using techniques for secure communication in the presence of a third party, usually an adversary). At least one source likens the Image to an “icon” since it is sacred art, “written” in symbols to express a topic of theology. [17] Others state that the “imprinted image of Our Lady of Guadalupe contains codices. A codex is a book or manuscript with ancient symbols and words; thus the miraculous ‘painting’ of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a story in pictures.” [18]

However else one may consider the written Nahuatl language, there is no doubt that it is symbolic, and therefore it is rich in meaning. It has been described as a “simple language, direct, smooth, precise, elegant, resounding, beautiful, significant, and even sublime.” Another important aspect of the language is its use of *disfrasismos*, “a way of communicating the most profound thought or feeling using a complementary union of two words or symbols which express one meaning. Connected with this is the importance of numerology for the Nahuatl people.” [19]

The symbolic aspects of their culture and language played a great role in the Virgin’s Image, her words to St. Juan Diego, and the resulting mass conversions. In Nahuatl thought, ideas expressed in *twos* meant a new beginning and an inherent duality. *Three* inferred intercession. *Four* symbolized perfection. *Five* was the center of all things, where God is found.

Every part of the Lady’s speech to St. Juan followed the Nahuatl pattern of numerical groupings. For example, when she revealed to Juan Diego her identity, she referred of herself in three ways, signifying intercession: “I am the Perfect Ever Virgin, Holy Mary, Mother of God.” When she spoke of God, she made four specific references to Him, which mirrored His wholeness and perfection. When she consoled St. Juan, anxious to find a priest for his uncle, she did so with five questions. Simultaneously, she reminded him of two things (exemplifying the duality factor in their language): First, that God was the center of all things and second, that she is the motherly intercessor, the Mediatrix between the only Mediator (her divine Son, Jesus Christ) and mankind.

Moreover, all the native peoples easily “read” the iconography of “Guadalupe” and the hidden message within the Image. The Aztecs not only heard the message as St. Juan related it, but they saw for themselves that the Lady on the tilma was also speaking directly to them.

The Virgin’s Face on the Tilma

And speak She did. With a first glance at the Image’s face, hands, the rose color of her gown and the turquoise color of her mantle, it is believed that the Aztecs and other indigenous peoples immediately understood that the Woman’s origins are earthly, and yet she came from Heaven.

In her 2001 book on Guadalupe, Manuela Testoni explained, “The Virgin’s head inclines to the right and her hands are joined in prayer,

indicating she is not a goddess, but that there is One greater than she. The celestial signs taken as a whole show that she came from the heavens, yet she also belongs to the earth as evidenced by the rose color of her gown, the color of dawn in the Valley of Mexico.” [20] Turquoise, many claim, was the Aztec color of divinity and royalty.

Because the Woman on the tilma did not stare at the viewer directly, as did vain images of their pagan gods, it is likely that the Aztecs first paid attention to her face. A few modern-day studies claim that, for the indigenous peoples, a person's face held great importance. The native peoples believed “that through the face, one could come to understand the inner person.” [21]

It is further opinioned that, in the Aztec culture, “[t]he person was considered to be born faceless and with a nameless heart. It was through education that the child was introduced into the tradition of the group and thus his face was gradually formed, and he received individuality by the unique way in which he assimilated unto himself the tradition of the group. Thus the face could be defined as the embodiment of self as it had been assumed and developed through education. Face and heart (*rostro y corazón*) then, for the Nahuatl, could then be approximated by our contemporary notion of personality. The face reflected the internal physiognomy [characteristics] of the person.” [22]

After analyzing the Image on the tilma in February 1979, [23] entomologist- biophysicist Phillip S. Callahan from the University of Florida later published a paper, writing: “The head of the Virgin of Guadalupe is one of the great masterpieces of artistic facial expression. In subtleness of form, simplicity of execution, hue and coloring, it has few equals among the masterpieces of the world. Furthermore, there are no portraits that I have ever observed which are executed in a similar manner...The expression suddenly appears reverent yet joyous, Indian yet European, olive-skinned yet white of hue. It is a face that intermingles the Christianity of Byzantine Europe with the overpowering naturalism of New World Indian; a fitting symbol for all the peoples of the great continent.” [24]

The facial features, shape, and coloring of the Virgin are neither wholly Aztec nor entirely Spanish but appear as a combination of both, a person known as a *mestiza* (a Spanish term meaning a person of two different races). A *mestiza* was the child of a Spanish father and an Aztec mother. Tragically, as hostilities between the two races increased, the mestiza children were

viewed as the lowest on the social scale. The Woman on the tilma contradicted that prejudice. In her face alone, the Virgin showed herself as Mother to all peoples.

Her eyes, as previously mentioned, attracted special attention. They were cast down, an aspect offering two interpretations: The Woman's humility before the unseen One Who is greater than she, yet simultaneously her eyes are lowered in the gentle glance of motherly solicitude. In contrast, the Mayan gods of the indigenous people were portrayed as impersonal, while the Aztec gods were carved or drawn to imperiously stare straight into the viewer's eyes.

"Mercy and truth shall go before thy face." [25] In a word, the countenance and coloring of the Virgin's face served a dual purpose. To the Spanish conquistadors, Our Lady's visage of a *mestiza* reminded them that she is the Mother to all persons, regardless of race or social standing - those who know both her and Her Divine Son, and those who are still seeking Them. The Virgin's face prompted them to recall and live by the Great Commandment to love God with all the strength of mind, heart, and soul and also to love one's neighbor as one's self. It also reminded them of St. Paul's infallible teaching: "For you are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ. 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." [26]

To the unconverted Aztecs, deceived and tyrannized by demon forces and later brutalized by disgraceful conquistadors who also succumbed to the wiles of hell, her motherly and compassionate face delivered an urgent yet gentle invitation of conversion to the one, true God of whom she was Mother: *"I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and virtue."* [27]

As we shall see, the almost 500 year-old Image of "Guadalupe" is a miracle for the Modern Age, not only for its remarkable preservation against the ravages of time. In one extraordinary Portrait, the Virgin of Guadalupe taught the Church's key doctrines of salvation in a language understood by Catholics and the indigenous peoples of Mexico. She revealed herself as "the Woman" of *Genesis* and the *Apocalypse* but also "the Woman" of Catholic Tradition. In other words, "Guadalupe" is a missive of God's Divine

Revelation.

Part III

The Image of Salvation History

“For I have chosen, and have sanctified this place, that my name may be there forever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually.”

– *II Paralipomenon* 7:16

The second part of this work explained that, to the Aztecs and other indigenous peoples, “the Woman on the tilma was replete with cryptography (hidden or secret writing, using techniques for secure communication in the presence of a third party, usually an adversary). The Image is also considered an ‘icon’ since it is sacred art, ‘written’ in symbols to express a topic of theology.” So not only does Guadalupe “speak” to the indigenous peoples of South America but also to the people of Europe and the East. Indeed, she is the Mother of all peoples.

Intriguingly, the view that Guadalupe is an icon was also the opinion of a Russian Orthodox priest, Fr. A. Ostrapovim, Dean of the Chair of Church Archeology in Moscow, who was presented a copy of “Our Lady of Guadalupe” for his appraisal. Possessing no knowledge of the Image’s history, he deduced it as a Byzantine-type icon, presumably of Eastern-Asiatic origin. Moreover, it was his view that “the painter of this Icon deviated from the very severe canons of icon painting and introduced much of himself into it. How accurate his analysis was!” [28]

Others state that the “imprinted image of Our Lady of Guadalupe contains codices. A codex is a book or manuscript with ancient symbols and words; thus Our Lady of Guadalupe is a story in pictures.” In other words: “To a people accustomed to communicate by means of painted symbols, Our Lady of Guadalupe provides an image that is as clear for the Indians in its symbolism as it is comprehensible to the [Spanish Catholic] missionaries.” [29]

The previous section also described what the Virgin’s facial features said to both the Spanish and Aztecs (and other meso-Americans). Then as now, even a quick but encompassing glance from top-to-bottom observes the Lady’s entire form, with a golden halo or “aureole” of rays emanating behind her, her overly-long rose robe covered with golden flowers which unfurls itself over her feet, the mantle of stars covering her head and flowing past her

feet, the crescent moon, and the upper-torso of an angel with the wings of an eagle. A second glance may take notice that at her neck hangs a jade brooch with a black cross on it. On the very outer rim of the Image, a white cloud is seen.

The following picture is the Image as it appears today.



The Maiden: While looking at her face, an Aztec gazing at the Image recognized that her hair, parted in the middle and freely flowing, was their cultural hairstyle for maidens (because married women bound up their hair). The Spanish Catholics in the New World immediately grasped the identity of the Woman on St. Juan Diego's tilma: She is the Virgin Mary, Mother of

God. Although her face bore the features of a mestiza (half Spanish and half Aztec), she was dressed neither in the fashion of a 16th century Aztec woman nor as a 16th century European Catholic woman. Rather, her apparel is that of a Jewish woman of Christ's time.

Since Catholic art often portrayed the Virgin standing over the untouchable moon (as a symbol of her sinless-ness and her perpetual virginity), the Spanish Catholics recognized the miraculous Image on the tilma as the Immaculate Conception, "the woman" foretold in *Genesis* 3:15, "the woman" who is the "new Eve." Further credence is given to this opinion because the Lady of Guadalupe first appeared to St. Juan Diego on December 9, the day on which Catholics of that time period celebrated the feast of the "Holy Conception of Mary." (The feast day was later moved to December 8; however, it was not until 1854 that a pope infallibly defined and promulgated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.)

The Aureole of Golden Rays: In the same Image, the Catholic missionaries also saw a partial fulfillment of the depiction of the Woman in the *Apocalypse*: "And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." [30] As already mentioned, in the prodigious "Portrait" of Guadalupe, the Virgin stands before the rays of the sun (and is therefore "clothed with the sun"), and the moon is beneath her feet. The only thing "obviously" missing from the apocalyptic description is the crown of twelve stars upon her head. [31] For their part, the Aztecs interpreted the Woman's position before the sun's rays to mean that she was greater than their sun god; the Spanish understood the aureole surrounding her entire figure to signify the Virgin's holiness to be of the highest degree.

Centuries later, Bishop Sean O'Malley would write, "In the last book of the Bible, the *Apocalypse*, we read about the woman about to bring forth a male child and of another portent which appeared in the sky, 'a huge red dragon.' The dragon represents Satan, the personal power of evil, as well as the powers of evil at work in history and opposing the mission of Christ and His Church." Can there be much doubt between the identities of the Woman of the *Apocalypse* and the Woman who appeared in the Mexico of 1531, identifying herself as "the Perfect Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the one who crushes the serpent"? [32]

The Cloud and the East: Outside of the golden aureole is a surrounding

cloud, the manifestation of the unseen God. For the Aztecs, “it is certain that the Lady came down from heaven because the rays of the sun surround her, piercing the cloud; the stars adorn her mantle, and her feet rest on the crescent moon. She comes from the east [33] and puts the cosmos in order; otherwise it would not be possible that the stars would be properly paired.” [34]

The Rose Tunic: The Woman on the tilma wears a very light-rose colored transparent tunic or robe, seemingly embroidered with gold-threaded floral designs, standing out in relief. Under the tunic is a white undergarment. The robe also possesses an “unusual luminosity” [35] which naturally captivated the Spanish Catholics and the Aztecs.

The rose tunic covers the Virgin’s feet and unfolds itself over the crescent moon. [36] One expert claimed that rose was the color of Huitzilopochtli, the sun god who gave and preserved life but who was likewise nourished with human blood. The Aztecs believed their sun god daily sacrificed his life for the people, after sunset falling into the underworld which he battled, while hoping to gain enough strength to rise once more into the sky. In return, the people sacrificed their lives, offering their blood to replenish their sun god.

The Virgin’s rose tunic revealed to the indigenous peoples that she possessed within herself the Precious Blood necessary to life. Yet this Maiden was married and she was expecting a Child. How did they know? The answer is intertwined with the following details.

The Flowers and the Offering of the Virgin who is a Mother: With the position of her hands, the flowers, and the color of her tunic, the Woman on the tilma revealed much. According to Fr. Virgilio Elizondo, “Her hands are not poised in the traditional Western style of prayer, but in an Indian manner of offering, indicating that something is to come *from* her.” [37]

Over the Woman’s womb is a small flower called *Nahui Ollin* (“Four Movement”), the *quincunx*, which to the people meant the Flower of the Sun. A four-petaled flower, it is the only one of its kind among what at first appear to be nine large, triangular flowers. When closely examined, the rose robe reveals a total of 57 flowers and 13 buds on the Virgin’s tunic. The *Nahui Ollin* (identified as a jasmine) is the “symbol of plenitude, representing as it did the four compass directions of the world, with heaven and the underworld

vertically encountering earth in the center...in the navel of the moon, as they called the Valley of Mexico. The *quincunx* was the central organizing concept of their society. Placed over Mary's womb, the four-petaled flower announced that even though their fifth Sun had died, the Sixth Sun was to be born of Mary of Guadalupe and had been born of her; Jesus Christ, the great Sun of Justice announced in *Malachi*, would be born to them liturgically at Christmas and could be born in them with Baptism." [38] Since the meso-Americans understood the sign as marking for them the beginning of a new era which, as history has shown, occurred at the same time Europe was being divided by the schism of the Protestant Revolt, perhaps this "sixth sun" was heaven's sign that the entire world was entering a new period of spiritual battle between the Virgin and the serpent. (In 1917 - almost four hundred years after the Guadalupe apparitions - Our Lady of Fatima appeared *six* times.)

It is believed that, initially, the nine large flowers (one on each sleeve, one on the bosom, and six below the sash) symbolized the still-beating hearts of the human sacrificial victims. The indigenous people would understand that since she, an expectant mother, wore them, she was telling them that her Son was the final victim. This is because the Aztecs believed their underworld had nine levels and the nine flowers on the Virgin's dress signified that all the levels were now filled; human sacrifice was not needed.

Furthermore, while Guadalupe's hands form the Aztec gesture of making an offering, her arms are positioned in the usual manner of an expectant mother. [39] The barely-noticeable waist cincture, the tips of which are seen just below her hands, was the married Aztec women's sign of maternity.

Together, these signs told the Indians this Woman was a Virgin and yet a married Mother. The rose of her tunic and the turquoise of her mantle had already revealed that she was from heaven and yet also of earth. The offering came from her but was made to the God to Whom she humbly inclined her head; simultaneously, her motherly glance said her offering was also given for them – the people!

For the Aztecs, a Virgin Mother was not beyond the realm of possibilities, since Tepeyac Hill was the former temple site for the pagan virgin-mother goddess, Tonantzin. This goddess, whose hair and garments were covered in snakes, had required human blood sacrifices (primarily desiring women and babies). In contrast, the Virgin Mother on Juan Diego's

mantle symbolically told them she was not only more powerful than all of their gods and goddesses, but that she and the Child in her womb did not demand their blood sacrifices.

The Cross on the Jade Brooch: For the Spanish, the brooch spoke for itself. For the Aztecs, jade was a symbol of life. When a woman gave birth to a son, her husband gave her a gift made of jade, [40] and since the Woman on the Image wore a jade brooch, the Aztecs knew that this Maiden was married and also the Mother of a Son. That this jade brooch bore the imprint of the Cross also told the Aztecs that the Spanish missionaries were indeed teaching them of the true God, Who had died on a cross and is now risen.

The Message of Life: In fact, via every symbol of the rose-colored tunic, the all-encompassing message is summarized in one Nahuatl word: *xihuitl*, life. The people recognized the symbols of life “in the vegetation of her tunic, life in the five great streams of living water represented as the stems of the heart-shaped flowers, stems which were adaptations of the Nahuatl sign for *atl*, water.” [41] Instead of demanding the sacrifice of their lives, this gentle Virgin Mother was offering them eternal life. She prodded them to the life-giving waters of Baptism, the same Sacrament of which the Catholic missionaries taught, which meant conversion to the Triune God of Whom they spoke.

“Needless, then, were the vain attempts to prolong life on earth by feeding the Aztec sun god Huitzilopochtli with human blood, the divine liquid which he needed if he was to be strong enough to battle his way through the underworld and rise anew each day to cross the sky. Needless were their liturgies involving infant sacrifice” which they had previously and secretly continued. Again, the native meso-Americans recognized on the Virgin’s tunic the nine large magnolia blossoms, which were “their symbols for the *yolloxochitl*, the Heart Flower, which had formerly been a metaphor to them of the hearts of their countless sacrificial victims. [42]

The Angel before the Moon: At first glance, the angel with the eagle feathers seems to carry the Woman. His tunic is red, a symbol of his love for the Woman. His red, white, and blue feathered wings are the emblems of loyalty, faith, and fidelity. [43] According to Antonio Valeriano’s description of the Image, “the angel comes forth from a cloud” which, for the “Indians,” symbolized water and rain or the one true God, Ometéotl.

To the Aztecs, the angel signified that the Woman was a Queen and a great heavenly being, because in their culture both royalty and deities were carried. In addition, being held aloft by a bearer signified to the people that she came to Juan Diego (and through him, to them) of her own volition, because heavenly beings and royalty always told their bearers where to carry them.

A closer look reveals that one of the angel's hands holds the bottom of the Virgin's mantle (representative of heavenly life), while the other holds the bottom of her robe (symbolic of earthly life). The Aztec culture did not have an image of angels with wings, but their hieroglyphic codex easily identified him as a messenger and as the bearer of the noble lady. [\[44\]](#)

To the Catholics of the 16th century and beyond, perhaps the angel with the eagle's wings also allude to another mystery in the *Apocalypse*: **“And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”** [\[45\]](#) Since God sent Our Lady to Mexico, since Juan Diego's birth name meant “Eagle Who Speaks,” and since Mexico's emblem is an eagle devouring a snake on a cactus, perhaps God has a special plan for Mexico. It might be the place where the woman (the Virgin and the Church) will be nourished during the great apostasy foretold by St. Paul.

Part IV

Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Apocalypse: The Silent Signs of Prophecy

“For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable.”

—*Romans I: 20*

Perhaps the greatest wonder of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is its inexplicable preservation spanning almost five centuries. It has already been ascertained that the wondrous Portrait’s codex and cryptography is a missive of Divine Revelation, delivering the history of Redemption to the peoples of the past. Since the Image is miraculously sustained and it symbolically tells the whole story of salvation history, it seems credible that - for the people of the future - Guadalupe also contains a divine message.

Since the Virgin stands on the moon, before the sun, and wears a mantle donned with 46 stars, Father Miguel Sanchez - a 17th century Spaniard priest who first published in Spanish an account of the apparitions [46] - saw the Lady of Guadalupe as the woman described in *Apocalypse*, Chapter 12. [47] As the Holy Scriptures attest, the Lord uses the lights of heaven for signs: “And God said: Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night, and let them be for **signs**, and for seasons, and for days and years: To shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth. And it was so done. And God made two great lights: a greater light to rule the day; and a lesser light to rule the night: and the **stars**.” (*Genesis 1:14-16*)

According to Fr. Miguel Guadalupe, who wrote an in-depth study on the Image’s symbols, the ancient Hebrews understood that, through the *Genesis* verse, God revealed that He designed the lights of heaven to serve many purposes. Fr. Miguel writes, “In Hebrew, the word ‘season’ is ‘moed’ and **signifies an appointed or fixed time**,” further explaining that the Hebrews used a different word to indicate the seasons of spring, summer, fall, or winter. He continues, “‘Signs’ and ‘seasons,’ used by God with respect to the mission of the stars, were to indicate ‘happenings’ and the ‘periods of time’ pertaining to them, specifically for prophetic reasons, especially that of

signifying historical incidents at chosen times as the plan of salvation unfolded.” [48] In addition, Fr. Bernard Kramer, an expert on the *Apocalypse* and author of *The Book of Destiny*, states: “In the Septuagint, [49] the word [sign] is used for celestial phenomena.” [50]

In brief, then, God uses the sun, the moon, and the stars as silent signs of prophecy. All of these signs appear on the Image of Guadalupe, and all of them except the stars have been previously addressed. Like the prophesied star of Jacob [51] which foretold Christ’s birth, the stars on Guadalupe’s mantle anticipate a particular era and events already foretold in Divine Revelation. It is reasonable to conclude that the Virgin of Guadalupe is directing mankind’s attention to the eschatological texts (referring to the last days) of the Gospels and the *Apocalypse*.

A Discovery about the Stars on Guadalupe’s Mantle

For centuries, no scholar or expert on the Image of Guadalupe investigated the meaning of the stars on Our Lady’s outer mantle. Then, after the 1981 publication of Phillip Callahan’s infra-red study [52] of St. Juan’s tilma, Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez of Hidalgo, Mexico [who, in 1978, published his own translation of the *Nican Mopohua* into Spanish [53] wondered if the mantle’s stars were constellations that had appeared in the December 1531 winter sky. He had already discovered that the whole Portrait constituted a codex which, as previously mentioned, is a book or manuscript with ancient symbols and words to be deciphered. [54]

Callahan, it is said, was a devout Catholic who was granted permission to study the miraculous tilma. He took at least 40 infrared photographs of the Image. Later, he wrote in his report: “Infrared photography is recommended before any restoration or cleaning is attempted on old paintings. It is most important because one can often detect undersketching accomplished before the artist applied paint to the canvas. Infrared photography also enables one to determine the nature of the sizing under the paint, provided the layers are not too thick. No study of art work can be considered complete until the techniques of infrared photography have been utilized, and certainly no valid scientific study is complete without such an analysis.”

His conclusions regarding the Image of Guadalupe sparked a modern-day debate. He wrote that the infrared shows that the tilma has no sizing underneath and the original Image itself has no visible brushstrokes, commenting that certain sections of the painting (for want of a better word)

were “inexplicable.” However, Callahan also claimed that the Image was heavily embellished with human additions. Others consider that the questioned elements were not additions but original elements of the Miraculous Image that were later “touched up.”

Admittedly, it is disturbing to think that anyone would dare to “retouch” a Miraculous painting. Still, parts of the painting are flaking, which seems to delight those who eschew miracles and heavenly apparitions. However, under the flakes are seen what appear to be original elements, especially the rays surrounding the Virgin. Furthermore, there are also sections of the Image which are *not* flaking, cracking, or showing any other signs of deterioration: the Virgin’s face, the rose robe, the hands, and the blue-green turquoise of the mantle (except for a small section on the bottom called the Aztec fold, which may have been “touched up” due to water damage).

At any rate, it was Callahan who also wrote on page 15 of his infrared report on the Image of Guadalupe: “The original figure, including the rose robe, blue mantle, hands and face...is inexplicable. In terms of this infrared study, there is no way to explain either the kind of color luminosity and brightness of pigments over the centuries. Furthermore, when consideration is given to the fact that there is no underdrawing, sizing, or over-varnish, and the weave of the fabric is itself utilized to give portrait depth, no explanation of the portrait is possible by infrared techniques. It is remarkable that after more than four centuries, there is no fading or cracking of the original figure on any portion of the agave tilma, which – being unsized – should have deteriorated centuries ago. Sometime after the original image was formed, the moon and the tassel were added by human hands, perhaps for some symbolic reason since the moon and the tassel were important to both Moorish-Spanish and Aztec mythologies. Sometime after the tassel and the moon were added, the gold and black line decorations, angel, Aztec fold of the robe, sunburst, stars and background were painted, probably during the 17th century. The additions were by human hands and impart a Spanish Gothic motif to the painting. In all probability, at the same time the tilma was mounted on a solid support, the orange coloring of the sunburst and white fresco were added to the background. The entire tilma for the first time was completely covered with paint. It seems unlikely that Juan Diego could have worn a tilma stiffened with fresco on the fabric to the Bishop’s palace. Therefore, the original must have been the simple figure on the cloth...”

“It is known that during the great flood of 1629 the Holy Portrait was taken from the Hermitage chapel by canoe to the cathedral in Mexico City, and that His Excellency Archbishop Don Francisco de Manzoyzuniga promised not to return the Virgin to the Hermitage until he could take her back with ‘dry feet’...The Image was returned in 1634...”

“In all probability the Holy Image, especially at the bottom and around the edges, suffered some water damage, and the angel and other decorations, as well as the outer fresco white, were added to cover up the damage. This is in no way different from the patches added to the Shroud of Turin to cover the fire damage to the Holy Relic.”

In the interest of transparency, encouraged by the Church because she allows these studies, it is possible that Callahan’s conclusions are correct. Reason would conclude, however, that some records or oral tradition would still exist if so many additions had been made. In fact, some historical records and events strongly indicate that the questioned elements were on the Image from the moment it appeared. Others contend that these same facts indicate the additions were made by some of the native artists in the early years of the miraculous Portrait’s existence. Since the Image is flaking only in certain areas, there are questions asking why. Was it touched up or were additions made (like a crown which is mentioned in old accounts but is not visible today) and then later removed?

To cite a few examples, Antonio Valeriano, a contemporary of St. Juan Diego’s who wrote the first *Nican Mopohua*, also penned a short work entitled *In Tlmatzintli* (The Tilma) in which he describes the Miraculous Image. (An English translation of the *Nican Mopohua* is included in Section II of this book.) All of the currently questioned elements are mentioned in his document. However, there are a few differences between Valeriano’s record and the Image as it appears today, which are as follows: The cincture is violet (not black); there is no mention of the crescent moon’s color (it is currently black because it seems to have been painted or painted over in real silver; silver always tarnishes) but he stated that the crescent moon’s points faced upward. Valeriano also specifically mentioned one hundred golden rays, some very long and others short, like flames, with twelve of them surrounding the Virgin’s face and head, and “some fifty” in all on either side. In addition, he alluded to a fact that *above the veil* there is a crown of gold with spires tapering upwards that are wider at the base. At this point in time,

the crown is not visible, which indicates that it was “erased” later with paint, presumably because it was an addition and not a part of the original Image. The latter assumption is also strongly indicated because Valeriano stated that the crown was *above the veil*; he did not say it was resting on the Virgin’s head.

In fact, the fifth page of Callahan’s report may have inadvertently given a reason why certain parts of the Image were possibly humanly enhanced when he wrote: “It is a simple fact that if one stands close to the painting the face is very disappointing as far as depth and coloring are concerned. At a distance of six or seven feet, however, the skin tone becomes what might best be described as Indian-olive (gray-green) in tone. It appears that somehow the grey and ‘caked’ looking white pigment of the face and hands combines with the rough surface of the unsized tilma to ‘collect’ light and diffract from afar the olive-skinned hue. Such a technique would be an impossible accomplishment by human hands. It often occurs in nature, however, in the coloring of bird feathers and butterfly scales, and on the elytra of brightly colored beetles. Such colors are physically defracted colors and do not depend upon absorption and reflection from molecular pigments but rather on the surface-sculpturing of feathers or butterfly scales. The same physical effect is quite evident in the face and is easily observed by slowly backing away from the painting until the details of the imperfections in the tilma fabric are no longer visible. At a distance where the pigment and surface sculpturing blend together, the overwhelming beauty of the olive-colored Madonna emerges as if by magic.” As mentioned earlier, the Face of the Virgin is untouched, but it might be that elaborations were made to the stars, moon, angel, rays, etc. if it was judged that from a distance their depth or coloring were also “disappointing.”

There is another fact which, ironically, can either support the stance that the Image’s questioned elements were always a part of the prodigy on the tilma or that that they were very early additions. In 1570 (39 years after the miracle and almost 60 years before the 1629 flood), the new prelate, Archbishop Montufár, sent King Philip II of Spain a beautiful oil painting which was a copy of the Image. The oil painting is identical to the miraculous Portrait, including the moon, sun rays, angel, cloud, stars on the mantle, etc. This means that if any additions were made to the original Image, they were done long before 1570.

It thus becomes somewhat evident why Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez had questions regarding Callahan's infrared report. Having already discovered some of the Aztec symbolism on the Image, Father decided to investigate the stars on the mantle.

He shared his intuition with a friend, Dr. Juan Homero Hernández Illescas, a medical doctor and a serious "amateur" astronomer. Dr. Illescas had an astronomical observatory on his roof, a Spitz Planetarium, an array of computer software that can calculate the positions of heavenly bodies at any time and in any century. He also possessed a collection of astronomical books, journals, and charts published by researchers and universities. [55]

Together, the two men discovered that the constellations on the Virgin's mantle are a "reverse" or "mirror image" of the stars' positions over Mexico City, just before sunrise on December 12, 1531 A.D. [56] The time and date are the very hour of Our Lady's last appearance to St. Juan Diego on the western side of Tepeyac Hill. It was also the same hour in which she appeared to his dying uncle, Juan Bernardino (who was miles away from Tepeyac Hill), cured him, and instructed him to tell the Bishop: "Call me and my image the Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, the one who crushes the serpent."

"What we see on the Image is the position of the stars as seen from above: God looks upon all of creation through Mary, the Immaculate One. He gives us the Gospel through her," as Fr. Miguel Guadalupe stated it. [57] Janet Barber, I.H.M., an authority on Guadalupe who translated the *Nican Mopohua* into English, said the stars appear on the Virgin's mantle as if Our Lady was looking down upon earth "from outside the dome of the heavens." [58]

In another work, she wrote that when the "image is reflected on a properly curved mirror to condense and 'straighten things out,' the image is reversed. Many, many galaxies and star clusters can be interpolated on the Image, just as the constellations can." [59] Barber further relates: "After I had poured over sky charts for weeks in Los Angeles, verifying the two men's identifications of each star, my traveling companion, Eilene Berg, I.H.M., and I were privileged to meet Dr. Hernández [Illescas] at his home in Mexico City, where he and his wife Doña Gloria showed us his original work on the project. We gasped when he held to the light a sky map corrected for 'reverse' anamorphosis [60] and Doña Gloria suddenly placed a photostatic

copy of the Image behind it. The correspondences were overwhelming.” [61]

It is also important to note that, on the Image’s mantle, the distance between the stars and constellations is compacted, closer than they appear in the heavens. They are, as previously mentioned, in the correct positions as they would be viewed from Mexico City, an hour before dawn on December 12, 1531. The east/west axis (instead of the commonly accepted north/south axis) and the stars’ closer proximities are the most likely explanation as to why it is only in the past 30+ years that the arrangement of the mantle’s stars was not seriously investigated.

The Stars and Constellations on the Mantle

Guadalupe’s mantle displays 46 eight-pointed stars. (Coincidentally, eighteen of them correspond to twenty-four of the brightest stars viewed from earth, which naturally attract our attention.) To understand the stars’ placement on the Virgin’s mantle, imagine one is standing before the Image. Her face is turned to the viewer’s left, and the left tip of the crescent moon is slightly higher than the right side. Of the 46 stars on the Image, 24 are on the right and 22 are on the left. To first see an illustration of the stars and constellations, please [click here](#).

The discovery of the Image’s east-west axis means the northern sky’s main winter constellations are instead seen on the mantle’s right (south) side. From the top right of Our Lady’s mantle, the 24 stars (either alone or as part of constellations) are as follows:

- Four stars in an almost straight-descending line, from the constellation **Ophiucus** (on the side of the Virgin’s head).
- Four stars from the constellation **Scorpio** (on the Virgin’s shoulder).
- All three major stars of the constellation **Libra** (closest to Her Immaculate Heart).
- Directly below Libra is a single star, Pi, the **Hydra** constellation’s tail.
- Almost directly across from the lone star *Pi*, on the outer right of the mantle, are two stars from the constellation **Lupus** (the Wolf).
- Below *Lupus* are five stars found in the constellation **Centaurus**.
- Below *Centaurus* is the complete four-starred **Southern Cross**.
- In the triangular fold of the mantle, just above the right tip of the crescent moon, is a single star, *Procyon*, the alpha star in the constellation

Canis Minor (the Lesser Dog, commonly known as the Little Dog). Here it should be noted that some Guadalupe illustrations confuse *Procyon* with *Sirius*.

On the mantle's left side, it is possible to view the Southern winter solstice constellations as they were viewed from Tepeyac Hill. From the mantle's left (top to bottom), the following 22 stars are seen:

- Four stars (including the alpha star *Arcturus*) in the constellation ***Boötes*** (the Herdsman).
- One star, the alpha star *Diadem* from the constellation ***Coma Berenices*** (Berenice's Hair).
- All seven stars in the constellation ***Ursa Major*** (the Great Bear).
- To the right of *Ursa Major*, two stars of the constellation ***Canes Venatici*** (the Hunting Dogs).
- Just below *Ursa Major*, two stars of the ***Lynx*** constellation.
- One star, the alpha star *Thuban* from the constellation ***Draco*** (the Dragon).
- Two stars from the constellation ***Auriga***, the “she-goat” (one star above the bending fold in the mantle, and one star below it).
- Three stars on the mantle's bottom right, hanging like a priest's maniple, from the constellation ***Taurus***.

“Different pointed stars have different meanings,” explained Abbot Dom Columban Hawkins of the Trappist Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Lafayette, Oregon. “An eight pointed star [as found on Guadalupe] means Holy Baptism and the regeneration-gifts God gave the Indians in such profusion through Our Lady.” [\[62\]](#) Moreover, eight is the symbolic number for the mystery of Christ as both God and Man, through Whom we receive the salvific sacraments, and/or it represents the Holy Trinity (because when the number “eight” is perfectly written, it has no beginning and no end, like God, the Alpha and the Omega, Who has no beginning and no end).

As we pursue decoding the stellar significance, may we keep in mind that the apparitions, the messages, and the Image itself are the first of heaven's interventions in the Modern Age. It is not a coincidence that, since biblical times, no era has witnessed such prodigies as have the last five centuries, and we should ask ourselves why.

When Our Lady personally came to Mexico in 1531, a great battle for souls was already underway. In that same year, Europe's Protestant Revolt resulted in the foundation of an anti-Catholic, anti-imperial alliance, which accelerated the already-existing religious, political and social revolution against Christ and His Church. [63] Dom Gueranger, author of the magnificent work *The Liturgical Year*, wrote:

“In the sixteenth century, even amidst their many divergences, the so-called Reformers agreed in utterly rejecting all the honors paid by the Catholic Church to the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the grounds that such veneration of the Mother detracted from the supreme worship due to her Divine Son. Four centuries have more than sufficed to show the result of so doing: the Son has followed the Mother! The descendants of those who refused to Mary the title and rights of *Theotokos* - Mother of God - refuse to Jesus the title of Son of God in the traditional sense of the term. Many reject His Godhead altogether, placing Him merely at the head of the line of great moral and social world-teachers; others still retain the word ‘divinity’ with respect to Him, but for them it is no longer synonymous with ‘deity.’” Since that century, the Modern Age has sprung one revolution after another, all of them demanding license from all authority, especially God's, under the guise of liberty.

Beginning in 1531, all true Marian apparitions are counter-signs against Satan, who constantly goads the pride of men to revolt against God. Satan's ultimate aim is mankind's seduction into the great apostasy, a time so evil that it gives rise to the anti-Christ, the one whom St. Paul called “the man of sin...son of perdition.” [64] In God's plan of Redemption, He wishes to crush Satan's pride under the feet of the humblest woman He created, the Immaculate Conception. This is the other title by which Guadalupe is recognized, but it should not be forgotten that by whatever title we address her, she is still the one and only “Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, the one who crushes the serpent.” [65] Just as in Mexico, Our Lady still converts people to Christ and His one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church, revealing her identity in such a way that the Church and the world should never forget her name or her office.

The Immaculate Conception is also the Woman of the *Apocalypse* (12:1), of whom St. John the Evangelist wrote “a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun...” After her appearance in heaven (wherein

“heaven” is the symbolic word for “the Church,” as biblical exegetes seem to agree), the apocalyptic red dragon openly manifests himself on the world scene, instigating revolts, insurrections, and persecutions against the Woman, her Son, and all of her other children in the order of grace. The last five centuries attest to the apocalyptic prophecy. “The various revolutions, then, represent the peaks of activity in what appears to be a steadily downward trend away from truth and goodness, although clearly God’s goodness, although clearly God’s grace is always at work in a hidden way, and [H]e is able to bring good out of apparent evil,” remarks Donal Anthony Foley, author of a work on Marian apparitions since the time of Guadalupe.

When objectively reflecting upon the last 500 years of world history, the consideration arises that perhaps God preserves St. Juan’s tilma because the Virgin’s Image is the apocalyptic “great sign in heaven” (that is, a great sign in the Church) that all mankind has entered the “last days.” With the incessant major rebellions against God since the 16th century, “it seems fair to say that these revolutions have been the major battles in a long-drawn-out war that has been going on for centuries now, a war that will go on until the end of time and *the second coming of Christ*.” [\[66\]](#)

Part V

Virgin of the Ages: The Message on the Mantle

“But neither will the Holy Virgin ever cease to succor us in our trials, however grave they be, and to carry on the fight fought by her since her conception, so that every day we may repeat: *‘Today the head of the serpent of old was crushed by her.’*”

-Pope St. Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* #25 (1904)

The last four sections explained that in her 1531 apparitions near Mexico City, Our Lady identified herself as “the one who crushes the serpent” and left an Image of herself, known as the Virgin of Guadalupe. Describing how the Image is a codex or form of cryptography, the preceding parts of this book reiterated that Guadalupe is a miraculously sustained Portrait, symbolically telling the whole story of salvation history. In this missive of Divine Revelation, the stars portrayed on the Image appear to be a very particular “message on the mantle.”

The previous section further explained that “God uses the sun, the moon, and the stars as silent signs of prophecy. All of these signs appear on the Image of Guadalupe, and all of them except the stars have been previously addressed. Like the prophesied star of Jacob which foretold Christ’s birth, the stars on Guadalupe’s mantle anticipate a particular era and events already foretold in Divine Revelation. It is reasonable to conclude that the Virgin of Guadalupe is directing mankind’s attention to the eschatological texts (referring to the last days) of the Gospels and the *Apocalypse*.” [\[67\]](#)

In concluding the examination of the Image’s message, it shall first be stated that this brief study on Guadalupe’s stars is not one of astrology. Rather, it is a *commentary* on signs in the biblical sense. As an earlier part of this work clarified, the Lord God said that all of the lights in the firmament of heaven are “for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.” [\[68\]](#) The word “season” signifies an appointed or fixed time, as Fr. Miguel Guadalupe explained. He also wrote, “ ‘Signs’ and ‘seasons,’ used by God with respect to the mission of the stars, were to indicate ‘happenings’ and the ‘periods of time’ pertaining to them, specifically for prophetic reasons, especially that of signifying historical incidents at chosen times as the plan of salvation

unfolded.”[69] Finally, it is important to also repeat what Fr. Bernard Kramer, an expert on the *Apocalypse* and author of *The Book of Destiny*, stated: “In the Septuagint, the word [sign] is used for celestial phenomena.”[70]

Decoding the Message on the Mantle

When the stars on Guadalupe’s mantle were matched to those in the heavens, a breath-taking discovery was made. Other stars and constellations intersect with the Image. High over the Virgin’s womb appears the constellation *Leo*, representing the Lion of Judah, the scriptural figure-type of Christ. [71] Intriguingly, the sun’s year (“the daystar” of the Scriptures, representing Christ) begins in the constellation of *Virgo* (the Virgin) and ends in *Leo* (the Lion), thus representing the cause and end of our redemption. Also worthy of note is the intersecting star, *Regulus* (Greek for “Little King”), which is the brightest star in the *Leo* constellation.

As Janet Barber, I.H.M. described the stellar intersections with the mantle, “the great Northern Crown, the *Corona Borealis*, lies invisibly at her temples; *Virgo*, the Virgin, on her virginal heart; [*Gemini*] the Twins, Castor and Pollux, on her knees, and *Orion* on the angel.” [72] With the exception of the last two, these interpolating constellations are self-explanatory. In my opinion, Gemini intersecting at the Virgin’s lap first signifies her Divine Son’s hypostatic union (both God and man), and it also bears simultaneous testimony that she is the mother of God and mankind. As for Orion, the “Hunter” constellation, its ancient Hebrew name is “coming forth as light,” and possibly signifies the Second Coming of Christ. [73]

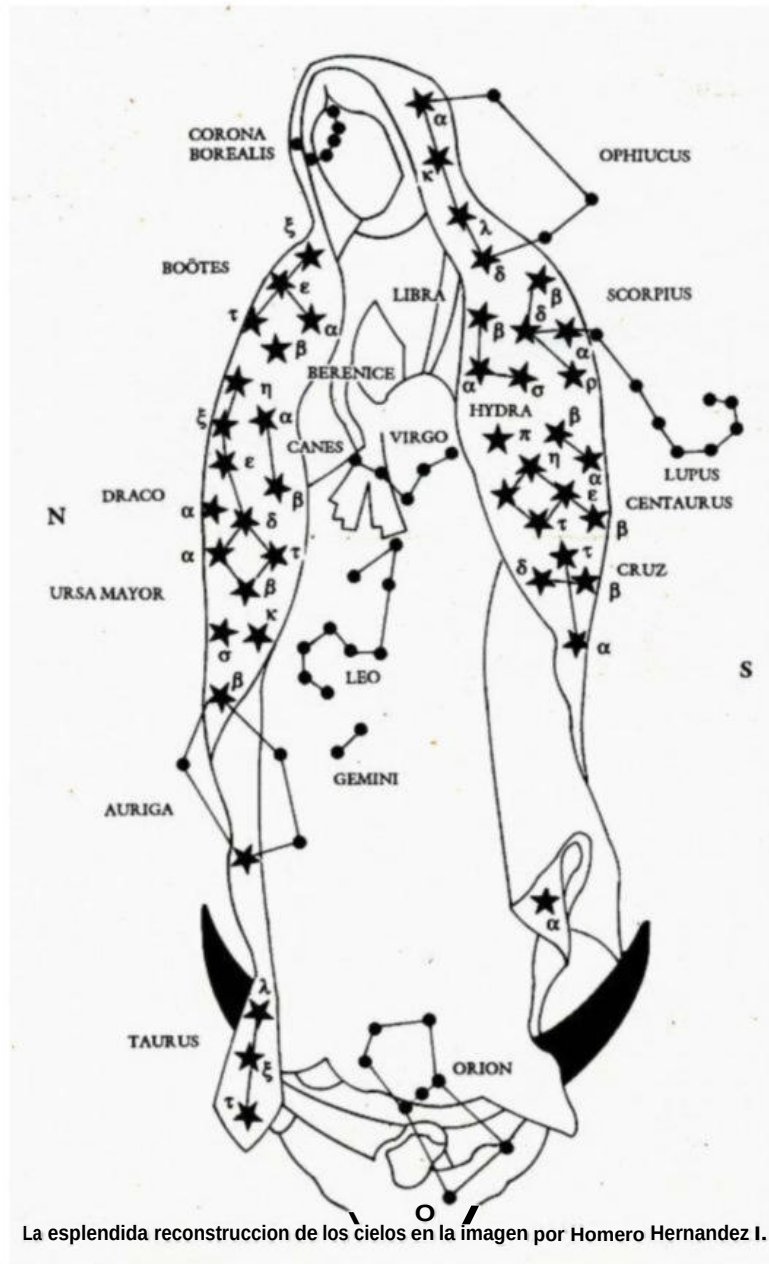
Of all the constellations represented or partly intersecting with Guadalupe, the Holy Scriptures unquestionably mention three. Named thrice is **Arcturus** [74], which is the alpha star in the constellation *Boötes* and appears on the Virgin’s mantle), named twice is **Orion** [75], and named once is “**the winding serpent**” [76] which is the constellation *Hydra*, represented by one star on the mantle.

As previously mentioned, of the 46 stars on the Image, 24 are on the right and 22 are on the left, all of them representing 21 total constellations - seven on the right, seven on the left, and seven that intersect on the red robe (7 x 3). Here we see great symbolic significance because, in Divine Revelation, **seven** is the number of God’s spiritual perfection and **three** is the number of the Holy Trinity. In addition, 18 of these 46 stars are the brightest

from earth's view. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* clarifies that it should "be understood that the numerical value of the Greek letters *iota* and *eta*, the first letters of the Holy Name [of Jesus, which in Greek is rendered *Iesous*], is 10 and 8 [the sum of which is] 18." [77] It seems, then, that the 18 brightest stars seen on every clear night declare the name of Jesus.

Since the number 46 is the product of 2×23 , one interpretation says the number "2" (represented by the two visible sides of the mantle) "is symbolic of the Church's witness of the Gospel [78] while 23 is symbolic of God's judgment on mankind. [79] In Scripture, the stars in collapse often symbolize the end of the world and the coming of Christ." [80] The stars on Guadalupe are in the correct positions for the pre-dawn hours of December 12, 1531 over Mexico City, but on the Image they are "in collapse" and much closer together than they actually appear in the night sky.

The next page illustrates the constellations which appear on the mantle, as well as other stars which invisibly intersect with the entire Image. The graphic was made by Dr. Juan Homero Hernández Illescas, the friend of Fr. Sánchez who helped him investigate the stars on the mantle.



The Mantle's Right Side

As shall be seen, the stars closer to the inner part of the mantle usually seem to represent the “good” constellations. Those on the outer edge presumably symbolize malicious ones. When looking at the Image, from the top right of Our Lady's mantle, the 24 stars (either alone or as part of constellations) are as follows:

- **Four stars in an almost straight-descending line, from the constellation *Ophiucus*** (on the side of the Virgin's head). In Catholic

symbolism, the number four represents universality or completion (for example, there are four marks of the Church – one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic). *Ophiucus* is called the serpent-holder, possibly symbolizing the masculine force (perhaps the office of the papacy) prophesied by St. Paul: “For the mystery of iniquity already worketh; only that he who now holdeth, do hold, until he be taken out of the way.” [81] Since the Protestant Revolution, the papacy has been under constant attack. St. Paul foretells that this masculine office or force is the only power that holds back the mystery of iniquity, for it was Christ Himself who instituted the papacy as the stewardship over His Church, and the Lord gave to it an authority that no other on earth holds.

- **Four stars from the constellation *Scorpio*** (on the Virgin’s shoulder). When drawing out the entire constellation, its head faces the Virgin and its tail is poised to strike. Since Satan is the ape of God, these four stars may represent his universal demonic influence in the false religious assemblies which steal souls from the true Church. Moreover, the *Apocalypse* prophesies that those “who have not God’s sign on their foreheads” shall suffer a torment “as the torment of a scorpion,” also foretelling the four angels that shall be loosed from the Euphrates River “to kill the third part of men.” [82] Furthermore, *Scorpio*, *Draco*, and *Hydra* form a trio (an “unholy trinity”), indicating the apocalyptic dragon, the beast and the false prophet. [83]

- **All three major stars of the constellation *Libra*** (closest to Her Immaculate Heart). Since the number three represents the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), *Libra*’s measuring scales seem to indicate God’s justice. Intersecting with the Image, the scales are tilted, possibly acting as a shield against *Scorpio* in defense of the Virgin’s Immaculate Heart. The upturned scales may also serve as a three-point reminder that Jesus is Our Lord, Saviour, and Judge.

- **Directly below *Libra* is a single star, *Pi*, the *Hydra* constellation’s tail.** Taking almost 7 hours to fully rise from the horizon, “*Hydra* is the largest constellation in the sky. It is associated with a serpent, snake, or a dragon...Despite its appearance, *Hydra* is not a serpent or a dragon, he is a multi-headed monster.” [84] However, “the celestial *Hydra* is depicted with only one head, presumably the immortal one.” [85] On the Image, *Hydra*’s head lies beneath Guadalupe’s womb, as if waiting to devour the child that is

born of her, directing our attention to *Apocalypse* 12:4.

- **Almost directly across from the lone star Pi, on the outer right of the mantle, are two stars from the constellation *Lupus* (the Wolf).** Always seeking to devour, the wolf is the natural enemy of man and beast. It may represent Satan's relentless pursuit for the ruin of souls. [86]

- **Below *Lupus* are five stars found in the constellation *Centaurus*.** The mythological Centaur was half man and half-horse. It possibly represents those among mankind who refuse to rise above their base natures, comprising the wicked on earth. [87]

- **Below *Centaurus* is the complete four-starred *Southern Cross*.** Clearly representing the sign of Christ's Cross, its Hebrew name of "Adom" literally means "cutting off." Initially, it seems to represent the race of Adam, which was "cut off" from God and the Beatific Vision until Christ the Messiah came to offer to the human race the gift of Redemption. It is also possibly a message that ancient Israel was "cut off" when it rejected Christ and the gift given to the Gentiles. Gentiles were pagans but they received and accepted the good news of the Gospel, and they then became God's inheritance (the new Israel) until their time is fulfilled. The *Southern Cross* also signifies the life of Christ, Who allowed His life to be "cut off" in the flower of His manhood.

- **In the triangular fold of the mantle, just above the right tip of the crescent moon, is a single star, *Procyon*, the alpha star in the constellation *Canis Minor*** (in Latin, the "Lesser Dog"). In the night sky, *Procyon* is among the eighteen brightest stars. *Procyon* (from the Greek, meaning "before [the] dog") forms the Winter Triangle with two other bright stars, Sirius in *Canis Major* and Betelgeuse in *Orion*. *Procyon* is also a part of the Winter Hexagon, a more complex asterism with vertices at Aldebaran in *Taurus*, Capella in *Auriga*, Castor and Pollux in *Gemini*, Rigel in *Orion* and Sirius in *Canis Major*. [88]

In the Scriptures, the dog was always considered unclean. Even the etymology and the ancient stories of *Procyon* hold many negative or debased meanings. Therefore, *Procyon*, "the lesser dog," could represent the prophesied "little horn," the future anti-Christ. [89]

The Mantle's Left Side

On the mantle's left side, it is possible to view the Southern winter

solstice constellations, as they were seen from Tepeyac Hill in the pre-dawn hours of December 12, 1531. [90] From the mantle's left (top to bottom), the following 22 stars are observed:

- **Four stars (including the alpha star *Arcturus*) in the constellation *Boötes* (the Herdsman).** Guadalupe's eyes seem to rest on this constellation, which represents Jesus, the Good Shepherd. [91] The constellation's shape is the Hebrew "tau," the letter which signifies the Cross and ransom atonement for sins. In the Greek, *Boötes* is the sign of "the coming one" and, since Christ has already come the first time, this constellation on the Image may be prophesying the second and final coming of Christ. [92]

- **One star, the alpha star *Diadem* from the constellation *Coma Berenices* (Berenice's Hair).** Its alpha star Diadem is considered the "gem" of the constellation, just as the Virgin Mary is the "jewel" of the human race. *Coma* means "the desired one." [93] In Greek, *Berenice* means "bringer of victory." Hence, "the desired one, the bringer of victory" points to the *Genesis* 3:15 prophecy of "the woman" (the Virgin Mary) and her seed (Christ). The constellation's name also brings to mind one of the Virgin's titles, *Our Lady of Victories*.

- **All seven stars in the constellation *Ursa Major* (the Great Bear).** This constellation's name literally means "great wild beast." In the *Apocalypse* (13:1-2) the beast "coming up out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns" is described with "feet as the feet of a bear." In biblical prophecy and visions, the sea (due to its salt) represents the human race, conceived with Original Sin (the only exception among all humans is the Virgin Mary; who received from God the singular grace of being free from all sin from the first moment of her conception. This grace was granted to her because she was chosen to be the Mother of Our Savior, Jesus Christ.). The sign of the Great Bear is a warning against Satan's works accomplished through men. [94] In our own time, the Great Bear is a well-known symbol for Russia.

- **To the right of *Ursa Major*, two stars of the constellation *Canes Venatici* (the Hunting Dogs).** As previously mentioned, the Scriptures do not speak well of dogs; in fact, a great insult is meant when a biblical character refers to himself as a dog or is called one. To cite one example, the Lord God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, castigating the watchmen of Israel as "dumb dogs not able to bark" who meet with "impudent dogs." [95]

Those words expressed God's indictment against the spiritual shepherds (the watchmen) who were entrusted with guarding against all dangers to the sheepfold and also to seek (or hunt) those who strayed and bring them back to safety. The Lord God accused the Israelite watchmen of failing at their appointed task, and judged them as "dumb dogs" (silent dogs) which are "not able to bark" due to the silencing of their own consciences. Instead of guarding the ancient Faith, they instead consorted with "impudent dogs" (the brazen and presumptuous who would audaciously force themselves into the sheepfold in order to render and destroy it).

For these reasons, there is a sensible conjecture that *Canes Venatici* represents the shepherd's staff and his authority in the Church [96], which refers to the guidance and authority of every Catholic priest. The highest authority is always the Pope, who is the Shepherd of shepherds. On the Virgin's mantle, the close proximity of *Canes Venatici* to *Ursa Major* (the great wild beast, or bear) may serve as a reminder that, since the great beast is always looking for a chance to strike, the Pope and shepherds of the Church must be ever-vigilant in their duties to God and His people. The closeness of *Ursa Major* to *Canes Venatici* may also foretell the religious shepherds who do fail to rightly use their authority to teach, govern, and sanctify God's people.

- Just below *Ursa Major*, two stars of the *Lynx* constellation.

According to the Harvard Observatory, "Lynx is one of the more recently recognized constellations, having been named by astronomer Johannes Hevelius in the 17th century. The constellation was supposedly named because it was claimed to be so dim that it could only be seen by a person with the eyes of a lynx." [97]

Lynx may refer to the risen Christ's words to Thomas the Apostle, "blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." [98] Its two stars on the mantle may also indicate "the two olive trees and the two candlesticks that stand before the Lord of the earth" [99] foretold in the *Apocalypse*. (Representing God's mercy and light, these two individuals are believed to be Enoch and Elias, who shall return during the time of Anti-Christ to both encourage those who are faithful to Jesus Christ and convert unbelievers).

What is very interesting about *Lynx* is that, although it had no name at the time of the Guadalupe apparitions, it nonetheless appears on the Image. The constellation has eight stars (eight is Christ's symbolic number) but so

far, only the fourth brightest has a name: *Alsciaukat* (from the Arabic, meaning “thorn”), also known as *Mabsuthat*, “the outstretched” (supposedly referring to a paw). [100]

- **One star, the alpha star *Thuban* from the constellation *Draco* (the Dragon).** In drawing the entire constellation, the head of *Draco* comes within a short space of Our Lady’s head. It is significant that *Draco*’s alpha star appears on the mantle, symbolizing the eternal enmity between the Virgin and the devil. [101]

- **Two stars from the constellation *Auriga*, the “she-goat”** (one star above the bending fold in the mantle, and one star below it). Since ancient times, *Auriga* is said to be a shepherd holding a she-goat. In the Old Testament, one sin offering was an unblemished she-goat, a considerable sacrifice since the prize female animals built the herd. [102]

The true Church is always referred to as a “she” since she is the Bride of Christ, and the Church’s children are called sheep and lambs, but never are they referred to as goats. It seems likely that a “she-goat” represent all spiritual forces which oppose Christ and His true Church. It may then indicate a false church or “religion” opposed to the Roman Catholic Church (and this did indeed happen with many schisms prior to the “Great Schism” of the Protestant Revolt, which was well underway when the Virgin appeared to St. Juan Diego). Because the she-goat is on the lap of a shepherd, it seems to specifically indicate a false church with a false shepherd. This could further symbolize an “anti-Church” that outwardly imitates the Roman Catholic Church but teaches false doctrines or perhaps a subversive infiltration into the true Church; the many sects which wrongly believe they are Christian but are, objectively speaking, heretical, and other false religions which have dreadfully forceful but persuasive leaders. According to another possible interpretation, the goat represents those who rejected the Lamb and are eternally lost. [103]

- **Three stars on the mantle’s bottom right, hanging like a priest’s maniple, from the constellation *Taurus*.** *Orion*’s bow points at *Taurus*, the bull. One view is that *Orion* opposing *Taurus* signifies the final battle between St. Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels. [104] This is because the bull, a ferocious and large animal, attacks and gores anything it perceives as a threat.

In Aztec cryptology, however, this part of the turquoise mantle, with the

“number” of its color (10) and the stars (3), announced the Aztec year of Guadalupe’s appearance: 13 Acátl, also known as “Thirteen Reed.” [105] Thirteen is the representative number for Christ and the 12 Apostles. It also became the central date for the Fatima apparitions, where once more Our Lady appeared as “a woman clothed with the sun.” [106]

In a word, “Our Lady of Guadalupe really is the great sign of *Apocalypse* 12. She is the irrefutable promise of the consummation of all things.” [107] The Image attests to the Scriptures which declare that the final judgment of the human race will be accompanied by astronomical events which include the stars. [108] Salvation history continues to unfold, as does the Message on the miraculous Image known as the Virgin of Guadalupe, who instructed the Church: “Call me and my image the Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, *the one who crushes the serpent.*”

In Tilmatzintli
“The Tilma”
by Antonio Valeriano

The following account of the tilma and the miraculous Image on it was written by Don Antonio Valeriano, a contemporary of St. Juan Diego. He was a well-known Indian convert to the Catholic Faith who became a scholar. He could read and write the Nahuatl language, Latin, and Spanish. It is said that Don Valeriano was a relative of the Emperor Montezuma, and that he personally knew St. Juan Diego. It is he who also wrote the Nican Mopohua, the original chronicle of the Tepeyac apparitions and the Miracle of the Flowers and the Image of the Immaculate Virgin, which is also included in this section.

The tilma on which the image of the Lady from heaven was miraculously imprinted was the *ayate* of Juan Diego, a coarse material but well sewn. The *ayate* was the garment worn by poor Indians; only nobles and the warriors wore garments made of cotton. The *tilma* worn by Juan Diego was made from *ichtli*, or threadlike strands from the *maquey* plant. The *tilma* on which the image of the Ever Virgin, our Queen, appeared was made of two pieces of cloth sewn together at one end with a fine thread and worn over the shoulders, with the two lengthy pieces hanging down the front and back.

The height of the blessed image, from the feet to the little crown on her head measures four feet nine inches. Her beautiful face is serious and noble but somewhat dark. Her posture is humble and her hands are folded in front of her chest, at the height of her cincture. The cincture itself is violet in color. Only the right foot reveals the toe of the shoe, which is ash-colored. Her tunic, so far as it is visible, is pink, but in the shaded areas it is bright red or ruby. The pattern of the tunic is that of various flowers, all in bloom, outlined in gold. At her neck she wears a round, golden brooch with black lines surrounding it and a cross in the center. Another soft, white garment can also be seen underneath which encircles the wrists snugly and has a highly embroidered pattern. The outside of her mantle is sky-blue, and it flows down from the top of her head to her feet, without ever covering her face. The mantle is pulled back, as it were, to reveal the front of the tunic. Its border is

relatively wide and is of gold, with approximately forty-six gold stars scattered throughout.

Her head is inclined to the right, and on top of her head, above the veil, is a crown of gold with spires tapering upwards that are wider at the base. The crescent moon is under her feet, with its points facing upward. Her image is in the center of the sun, which sends forth its rays from behind the Lady, surrounding her entirely. There are one hundred golden rays, some very long and others short, like flames. Twelve surround her face and head, and some fifty on either side. Around the periphery there is a white cloud which follows the outline of the whole.

This precious image moves supported by an angel, whose figure terminates at the waist and nothing is seen of its lower body. It is as if the angel is emerging from the cloud. The extremities of the mantle and clothing of the Lady, which reach all the way down to her feet, are held up by the hands of the angel, who is dressed up in a red tunic with a gold collar. His outspread wings are covered up with brightly-colored long feathers. The hands of the angel hold up and support the Virgin and he seems quite content to thus carry the Queen of heaven.

Nican Mopohua: “Here It is Told”

An English Language Translation

Don Antonio Valeriano, as mentioned previously, was a famous Indian convert. It is believed that he wrote the following account between 1540 and 1555 A.D. Originally written in the symbolic Nahuatl, the spoken language of the Aztecs, this account was eventually translated into Spanish and later into English. Brother Francis Mary Kalvelage, F.I., editor of “A Handbook on Guadalupe,” notes that the phrase “Holy Mary of Guadalupe” is found in the earliest accounts of the Nican Mopohua, adding, “However, it seems unlikely that she used the Spanish, Santa Maria de Guadalupe, since the Indians had a difficult time in pronouncing the ‘g’ and ‘d’ sounds, which were unknown to them.” He also adds that “the Spanish were notorious in not being able to pronounce Nahuatl words. They would naturally changes names of people, places, etc. into Spanish words having a similar sound.”

There are many English translations of the Nican Mopohua, and none of them are identical. The version below utilizes several English translations for the account – but with one difference. In order to be as authentic as possible, the words of Our Lady are a literal translation from the Spanish to English, a work done by Janet Barber, I.H.M. She wrote the English translation below from a Nahuatl to Spanish translation made by the Nahuatl scholar, Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez. It was he who made the discoveries about the stars on the mantle, as well as the Aztec comprehension of the Image.

Here follows a carefully ordered account of the marvelous manner in which the Ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of God, Our Queen, recently appeared on Tepeyac Hill, known as Guadalupe. She first appeared to a poor Indian, worthy of respect, Juan Diego; and afterwards her beautiful Image appeared [on his tilma] in the presence of the new Bishop, Friar Don Juan de Zumárraga.

Ten years after the fall of the city of Mexico, when arrows and shields were put aside and there was peace in the villages, the faith and knowledge of the true God, Author of life, had begun to put forth shoots and blossom. At that time, in the year 1531, a few days after the beginning of December, there was a humble man of the people, Juan Diego, a native of Cauhtitlan, who worshipped at the chapel of Tlatilolco.

He was on his way to pursue the study of God and His Commandments at the small church in Tlatilolco. It was still dark on Saturday when he set out. Dawn was breaking as he arrived at the foot of Tepeyac Hill. He heard singing from the crest of the hill, which sounded like the song of many birds. When at times their voices quieted, the hillside seemed to echo in response. Their singing, very soft and pleasant, surpassed that of the coyoltototl and tzinizcan and other fine song birds. Juan Diego stopped to look and thought, "Could I be worthy of what I'm hearing? Am I dreaming? Am I arising from sleep? Where am I? Perhaps in the earthly paradise of flowers and corn, about which our ancestors spoke? Maybe already in heaven?" He was looking toward the summit and to the dawning of the east of the foothill to see the source of the beautiful heavenly singing, when suddenly it stopped and silence fell, and he heard someone calling him from the top of the hill, saying **"Juan, dearest Juan Diego."**

He then climbed the hill in the direction of the voice, not at all frightened but, rather, feeling extremely happy. Upon reaching the summit, he saw a lady standing there who told him to come closer. He was filled with awe and admiration by her splendor. Her clothing was radiant like the sun; the crag on which her foot was resting was giving off rays of light, and looked like a bracelet of precious stones; even the earth glistened like the mist of a rainbow. The mesquite bushes, prickly pears, and other lowly herbs and grasses which usually grow there seemed like emeralds, the foliage like fine turquoise, and the branches and thorns shining like gold.

He bowed before her, hearing her very gentle, polite words which were delivered as to someone very respected. She said: **"Listen, Juan, my dearest and youngest son, where are you going?"** He answered, "My Lady, my Queen and my little Girl I am going to your house in Mexico-Tlatilolco to continue the study of the divine mysteries taught us by the images of Our Lord, the priests." She spoke then, revealing her blessed will, saying:

"Know, know for sure, my dearest, littlest, and youngest son, that I am the perfect and ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the God of truth through Whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near us, the Lord of heaven and earth. I want very much to have a little house built here for me, in which I will show Him, I will exalt Him and make Him manifest. I will give Him to the people in all my personal love, in my compassion, in my help, in my protection: because I am truly your

merciful Mother, yours and all the people who live united in this land and of all the other people of different ancestries, my lovers, who love me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their complaints and heal all their sorrows, hardships and sufferings. And to bring about what my compassionate and merciful concern is trying to achieve, you must go to the residence of the Bishop of Mexico and tell him that I sent you to show him how strongly I wish him to build me a temple here on the plain; you will report to him exactly all you have seen, admired and what you have heard.

Know for sure I will appreciate it very much, be grateful and reward you. And you? You will deserve very much the reward I will give you for your fatigue, the work and trouble that my mission will cause you. Now, my dearest son, you have heard my breath, my word; go now and put forth your best effort.”

At this, he bowed low before her and said, “My Lady, I am going now to carry out your charge; for the present, I, your poor servant, take leave of you.” He then descended the hill, intent on fulfilling her command, and continued on along the causeway which goes directly to Mexico City. Once inside the city, he went without delay to the residence of the Bishop, a new prelate, who had only recently arrived. His name was Friar Don Juan de Zumárraga, a religious of St. Francis. As soon as he got there he tried to see him, begging the servants to announce him. After a long while they came to call him, the Bishop having ordered that he should enter.

Upon entering, he bowed and knelt before him and immediately gave him the message of the Lady from heaven, telling him everything he had admired and had seen and heard. After hearing the story and the message, the Bishop didn’t seem to believe him and said, “You will come again, my son, and I will hear what you have to say at greater leisure; I shall look into the matter carefully from the very beginning and give much thought and consideration to the request you have brought me.” He left feeling sad, because the message entrusted to him was not immediately accepted. He returned that same day, heading directly to the crest of the hill and found the Lady from heaven waiting for him on the very spot where he first saw her. He fell to his knees before her, saying:

“My dearest little Mistress, Lady, and Queen, my littlest Daughter, my dear little Girl, I went where you sent me to carry out your order. Although it

was difficult for me to enter the Bishop's quarters, I saw him and explained your message exactly as instructed. He received me kindly and listened with attention; but as soon as he answered, it was apparent that he did not believe it; he said, "You will come back some other time, and I shall listen to what you say at greater leisure; and I shall examine it from the very beginning and think about the request you have delivered."

"The way he answered me I could clearly see that he thinks I made have made it up, about your wanting a little house built for you here, or that it is not from you. So I beg you, my Lady, Queen, and my little Girl, to send one of the nobles who are held in high esteem and respected with the message, so that it will be believed; for I am a man of no importance, a backframe, a follower. You are sending me to a place that I am not used to spending my time, my little Virgin, my youngest Daughter, my Lady. Forgive me if I grieve you and you are angry with me."

The Most Holy Virgin, worthy of all honor and veneration, answered:

"Listen to me, my youngest and dearest son, know for sure that I do not lack servants and messengers to whom I can give the task of carrying out my words, who will carry out my will. But it is very necessary that you plead my cause and, with your help and through your mediation, that my will be fulfilled. My youngest and dearest son, I urge and firmly order you to go to the Bishop again tomorrow. Tell him in my name and make him fully understand my intention that he start work on the chapel I'm requesting. Tell him again that I am the ever Virgin, Holy Mary, the Mother of God, who is sending you."

Juan answered, "My Lady, Queen, my little Girl; I do not wish to give you anguish, pain, or grieve your heart; I shall go very gladly as you command; I shall by no means give up, nor do I consider it any trouble. I shall go to fulfill your wish; but I may not be heard or, if heard, still not believed. Tomorrow afternoon, when the sun goes down, I shall return to give you an account of the Bishop's answer. I must now take leave of you, my youngest Daughter, little Maiden, my little Girl and Lady. Rest well in the meantime." Then he went to his home to rest.

The following day was Sunday and in the very early dawn he left his house going directly to Tlatilolco for religious instruction. He arrived just before ten o'clock and heard Mass, keeping his mission in mind. Once the crowd had dispersed, he set out for the Bishop's residence. As soon as he got

there, he insisted on seeing the Bishop, and after many difficulties was allowed in. Kneeling down before him, he repeated sadly and tearfully the demand he brought from the Lady from heaven. He was extremely anxious to be believed and that the Bishop comply with the wish of the Perfect Virgin that a place of worship be erected on the spot she had clearly indicated.

The Bishop, in order to verify the matter, asked many questions. Where had he seen her? What was she like? He gave a full account of everything. But even though he recounted with great exactitude what she was like and all he had seen and marveled at, and the Bishop saw that it was the Perfect Virgin, Mother of the Saviour, he was unable to act without further evidence. He said he could not carry out the order only on his word and request, but that it was necessary to give him a sign that the message had come from the Lady from heaven herself. As soon as he heard that, Juan Diego said, "Lord Bishop, what kind of sign do you require? I shall go and request it of the Lady from heaven who sent me."

When the Bishop saw that he confirmed everything and did not hesitate or doubt in the slightest, he dismissed him. He had him followed by members of the household whom he trusted so that they could watch and see where he went, whom he saw and spoke to. This they did. When Juan Diego came directly to the causeway, those who were following him lost sight of him on the wooden bridge where the brook comes out near Tepeyac; and although they looked everywhere, there was no trace of him to be found. So they turned back, annoyed not only because he had slipped out of sight, but because he had frustrated their attempt in shadowing him. After telling the Bishop what had happened, they urged him not to believe his story, that Juan was lying, making up a story, dreaming or imagining the whole thing.

They agreed that if he should ever come back, they would grab him and punish him severely so that he would never tell lies nor get the people all excited. In the meantime, Juan Diego was with the Most Holy Virgin giving her the Bishop's reply. Upon hearing it, she said:

"That is fine, my youngest and dearest son; you will return here tomorrow so that you may take the sign he asked for. Then, he will believe and no longer doubt or be suspicious of you; and know, my dear son, I shall reward your care, work and fatigue on my behalf. Go now; tomorrow, I shall be here waiting for you."

Upon arriving home Sunday, he found his uncle, Juan Bernardino,

seriously ill and in danger of death. First, he went for the native healer who treated him, but he was too late. The next day, Monday, when Juan Diego was to take the sign to the Bishop in order to be believed, he did not return. During the night, the uncle begged him to go to Tlatilolco to bring a priest to hear his confession and prepare him for dying, knowing that his time had arrived, and that he would never get well.

Early in the morning of Tuesday, in the middle of the night, Juan Diego was already on his way to Tlatilolco for a priest. As he approached the road that passes at the side of the foothill of Tepeyac toward the west, which was his usual route, he thought, "If I take the direct path, the Lady may see me and I must not be detained by the sign she wished to give me. I must hurry to get a priest first, since my poor uncle is anxiously waiting for him." So Juan Diego took another path around the hill which crosses toward the east side in order to reach Mexico more quickly and not be detained by the Queen of Heaven. He thought this would prevent his being seen by her, but she was watching him from where she saw him before.

She came down the hill and blocked his way and said to him:

"What is happening, dearest and youngest of my sons? Where are you going? Where are you headed?"

And he, regretful, ashamed, and fearful, prostrated himself before her and said in greeting:

"My little Maiden, my youngest Daughter, my Girl, I hope that you are happy. How are you this morning? Do you feel well? Although it grieves me and may cause you anguish, I must tell you that one of my servants, my uncle, is very ill. A terrible sickness has struck him down and he will die soon.

"And now I hurry to your little house in Tlatilolco to call on the beloved ones of Our Lord, our priests, to hear his confession and prepare him for death. For we all are born for that and await the difficult day of our own death. Although I go, I shall return right away to take care of your message, my Lady and my little Maiden. I beg you to forgive me, be patient with me a little longer, because I am not deceiving you, my youngest Daughter, my little Girl. Tomorrow without fail, I will return as fast as possible." After hearing Juan Diego's words, the most merciful Virgin spoke:

"Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest and dearest son, that the

thing that disturbs you, the thing that afflicts you, is nothing. Do not let your countenance, your heart be disturbed. Do not fear this sickness of your uncle or any other sickness, nor anything that is sharp or hurtful. Am I not here, I whom am your Mother? Are you not under the shadow of my protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? Let nothing else worry you, disturb you. Do not let your uncle's illness worry you, because he will not die now. You may be certain that he is already well." [And at that moment the uncle was restored to health, as they were to learn later.]

When Juan Diego heard this from the Queen of Heaven, he felt better, was comforted and at peace. He begged her to send him to the Bishop without delay with some sign that he would be believed. The Lady from heaven told him:

"Go up, my dearest son, to the top of the hill, to where you saw me and received my directions and you will find different kinds of flowers. Cut them, gather them, put them all together, then come down here and bring them before me."

Juan Diego went up the hill immediately and, upon reaching the crest, was astonished to find so many beautiful, exotic varieties of fine, full-bloomed flowers since it was out of season, being the time of the biting frost. They were very fragrant and covered with night dew, which gleamed like precious pearls. He went around cutting and gathering them and placed them inside the fold of his tilma. The top of the hill was no place for flowers to grow; it was stony and full of nothing but thistles, thorns, prickly pears, and mesquites. At times grass grew there, but this was the month of December when frost kills everything. He hurried down the hill, taking the flowers to the heavenly Maiden. She took them into her precious hand and rearranged them in his tilma, saying:

"My youngest and dearest son, these different kinds of flowers are the proof, the sign that you will take to the Bishop. You will tell him from me that he is to see in them my desire, and therefore he is to carry out my wish, my will. And you, who are my messenger, in you I place my absolute trust. I strictly order you not to unfold your tilma or reveal its contents until you are in his presence. You will relate to him everything very carefully: how I sent you to the top of the hill to cut and gather

flowers, all you saw and marveled at in order to convince the Governing Priest so that he will then do what lies within his responsibility so that my house of God which I requested will be made, will be built.”

After the Lady from heaven had finished her instructions, he set out along the causeway leading directly to Mexico City. Happy now, and feeling sure that this time everything would go well, he held his precious burden close to protect it and prevent any of its contents from falling out, while delighting in the fragrance of the beautiful flowers. When he arrived at the residence of the Bishop, the doorkeeper and the other servants stepped out to meet him. He begged them to inform the Bishop how urgent it was that he see him, but they all refused pretending they did not hear him, either because it was still dark, or because they knew him from his other visits and felt he was giving them trouble with his repeated visits.

Also, they had already been informed by their companions of how he had slipped from their sight the time they had been ordered to follow him. When they saw him standing there a long time, head lowered, doing nothing in case he should be called, they noticed that he seemed to be carrying something. Out of curiosity, they went over to him and tried to see what it was that he was carrying.

When Juan Diego saw that he couldn't hide what he carried, and fearing that they would continue to damage the flowers, he opened the folds of his tilma a bit to give them a peek. When they saw that it contained exquisite, different, blooming flowers out of season, they were awed. They were impressed how fresh they were, how open their corollas were, how good they smelled, and how beautiful. They dared to snatch some of them away from him three times but they could not succeed. They no longer saw real flowers, but flowers which seemed to be painted, embroidered on the tilma.

They went right away to tell the Bishop what they had seen and informed him about the humble Indian who had come before and was waiting a long time to see him. Hearing this, the Bishop realized that Juan had the proof he needed to convince him to carry out Our Lady's wish. He immediately ordered them to show him in. Upon entering, Juan Diego prostrated himself before the Bishop as he had done the other times, reporting everything he had seen and marveled at, and repeating her message. He said:

“Your Excellency, I did as you ordered, telling my Mistress, the Heavenly Maiden, Holy Mary, the Beloved Mother of God, that you were

asking for proof so that you could believe me, so that you could build her sacred little house that she requested. I told her that I had promised to bring you some sign of proof just as you requested. She listened carefully to your word and was pleased to receive your request for a sign, so that her beloved will could be carried out. Today, while it was still night, she ordered me to see you again. I asked for the proof, so that I would be believed, and she kept her promise immediately, sending me up a hill where I had seen her before to cut various roses and other flowers.

Although I knew very well that the top of the hill wasn't the place where flowers grow, because it is full of craggy rocks, thorns, spiny acacias and mesquite bushes, I didn't doubt or hesitate one minute to do her bidding. When I arrived at the crest of the hill, it seemed as if I were in paradise, because there in one place was a great variety of different precious flowers, all exquisite and sparkling with dew, which I set about gathering. After I brought them down to her, she took them in her holy hands and rearranged them in the hollow of my ayate for me to bring and present to you in person. She told me to give them to you from her so that you would recognize the sign you requested and comply with her wishes, and also to show you that I was truthful. Here they are, please receive them."

He then opened his white mantle which held the flowers and, as the different precious flowers fell to the floor, then and there the beloved Image of the Perfect Virgin, Holy Mary, Mother of God, suddenly appeared in the form and figure in which it remains to this day and is preserved in her chapel at Tepeyac called Guadalupe. Upon seeing it, the Bishop and all those present fell to their knees full of awe and reverence, greatly affected and moved by what they saw. They then grew sad, they wept, and their hearts and minds were in ecstasy.

The Lord Bishop prayed in tears begging forgiveness for not having immediately carried out her will to do what she wanted. He rose to his feet, and untied the mantle from around Juan Diego's neck on which the Heavenly Queen's Image was imprinted, and took it to his private chapel. He detained Juan Diego, who remained another day at the Bishop's house. The following day he said: "Come, let us go to see the place where the Lady from heaven wants her temple to be built." People were immediately invited to build her 'sacred little house.' As soon as Juan Diego had pointed out where the Lady from heaven wanted her chapel to be built, he asked permission to leave. He

wanted to see his uncle who had been gravely ill when he left for Tlatilolco to call the priest to confess him and prepare him for dying.

But they didn't let Juan Diego go alone; a number of people went with him to his house. Upon arriving, they saw the uncle was well and happy without ache or pain. He was surprised to see his nephew accompanied by so many people and inquired as to the cause for so much honor and attention. The nephew explained that when he had left to bring the priest to hear his confession and prepare him for dying, the Lady from heaven had appeared to him on Tepeyac, and that she had consoled him greatly by telling him not to worry because his uncle was already restored to health. She then had sent him to Mexico City to ask that a house be erected for her on Tepeyac.

The uncle then revealed that it was indeed at that same moment he was suddenly restored to health, when she appeared in much the same way as she had appeared to his nephew. She related too that she had sent Juan to see the Bishop in Mexico. At the same time, the Lady told Juan Bernardino that as soon as he saw the Bishop, he must reveal to him the miraculous manner in which she had effected his cure and that he should convey to him the proper name for her blessed Image, The Perfect Virgin, Holy Mary of Guadalupe.

Then they took Juan Bernardino before the Bishop so he might speak to him and give him his testimony. Both Juan Bernardino and his nephew stayed at the Bishop's residence several days, until the chapel of the little Queen of Tepeyac was erected where she revealed herself to Juan Diego. The Reverend Bishop had the Holy Image of the beloved heavenly Maiden transferred from the oratory to the main church, so that all the people could see and admire it. Absolutely, the whole city came to see and admire her precious Image and pray before it. They marveled at the miraculous way it had appeared, since absolutely no one on earth could have painted her beloved Image.

Guadalupe is the Immaculate Conception

“Raise up your heads, then, ye children of Adam,
and shake off your chains!”

Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8

By Dom Gueranger

*When Our Lady first appeared to St. Juan Diego, she chose the daybreak on her own Feast Day, the Immaculate Conception. Just as the morning star appears before the sun rises, the Virgin Mary is also appearing before the Second Coming of her Son, Jesus Christ, Our Lord. The wondrous dogma of the Immaculate Conception was infallibly defined by Blessed Pope Pius IX in 1854. The dogma defines that the Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her existence, was conceived without sin. She isn't the immaculate result of conception but she **is** the Immaculate Conception. The Immaculate Conception is not a miracle of God to ponder only during Advent. The Holy Trinity granted this singular grace to the Virgin because she was chosen by God to be the Mother of God, the woman foretold in Genesis 3:15 who will crush the serpent's head. In his essay below, Dom Gueranger explains how this mystery of God occurred, which will be understood by people of goodwill.*

At length, on the distant horizon, rises, with a soft and radiant light, the aurora of the Sun which has been so long desired. The happy Mother of the Messiah was to be born before the Messiah Himself; and this is the day of the Conception of Mary. The earth already possesses a first pledge of the Divine mercy; the Son of Man is near at hand. Two true Israelites, Joachim and Anne, noble branches of the family of David, find their union, after long barrenness, made fruitful by the Divine omnipotence. Glory be to God, Who has been mindful of His promises, and Who deigns to announce, from the high heavens, the end of the deluge of iniquity, by sending upon the earth the sweet white dove that bears the tidings of peace!

The feast of the blessed Virgin's Immaculate Conception is the most solemn of all those which the Church celebrates during the holy time of Advent; and if the first part of the cycle had to offer us the commemoration of some one of the mysteries of Mary, there was none whose object could better harmonize with the spirit of the Church in this mystic season of

expectation. Let us, then, celebrate this solemnity with joy; for the Conception of Mary tells us that the Birth of Jesus is not far off.

The intention of the Church, in this feast, is not only to celebrate the anniversary of the happy moment in which began, in the womb of the pious Anne, the life of the ever-glorious Virgin Mary; but also to honor the sublime privilege, by which Mary was preserved from the Original stain, which, by a sovereign and universal decree, is contracted by all the children of Adam the very moment they are conceived in their mother's womb. The faith of the Catholic Church on the subject of the Conception of Mary is this: that at the very instant when God united the soul of Mary, which He had created, to the body which it was to animate, this ever-blessed soul did not only not contract the stain, which at that same instant defiles every human soul, but was filled with an immeasurable grace which rendered her, from that moment, the mirror of the sanctity of God Himself, as far as this is possible to a creature. The Church with her infallible authority declared, by the lips of Pius IX, that this article of her faith had been revealed by God Himself. The Definition was received with enthusiasm by the whole of Christendom, and the eighth of December of the year 1854 was thus made one of the most memorable days of the Church's history.

It was due to His Own infinite sanctity that God should suspend, in this instance, the law which His Divine justice had passed upon all the children of Adam. The relations which Mary was to bear to the Divinity could not be reconciled with her undergoing the humiliation of this punishment. She was not only daughter of the eternal Father; she was destined also to become the very Mother of the Son, and the veritable bride of the Holy Ghost. Nothing defiled could be permitted to enter, even for an instant of time, into the creature that was thus predestined to contract such close relations with the adorable Trinity; not a speck could be permitted to tarnish in Mary that perfect purity which the infinitely holy God requires even in those who are one day to be admitted to enjoy the sight of His Divine majesty in Heaven; in a word, as the great Doctor St. Anselm says, "it was just that this holy Virgin should be adorned with the greatest purity which can be conceived after that of God Himself, since God the Father was to give to her, as her Child, that only-begotten Son, Whom He loved as Himself, as being begotten to Him from His own bosom; and this in such a manner, that the selfsame Son of God was, by nature, the Son of both God the Father and this blessed Virgin. This same Son chose her to be substantially His Mother; and the Holy Ghost

willed that in her womb He would operate the conception and birth of Him from Whom He Himself proceeded.”

Moreover, the close ties which were to unite the Son of God with Mary, and which would elicit from Him the tenderest love and the most filial reverence for her, had been present to the Divine thought from all eternity: and the conclusion forces itself upon us that therefore the Divine Word had for this His future Mother a love infinitely greater than that which He bore to all His other creatures. Mary's honor was infinitely dear to Him, because she was to be His Mother, chosen to be so by His eternal and merciful decrees. The Son's love protected the Mother. She, indeed, in her sublime humility, willingly submitted to whatever the rest of God's creatures had brought on themselves, and obeyed every tittle of those laws which were never meant for her: but that humiliating barrier, which confronts every child of Adam at the first moment of his existence, and keeps him from light and grace until he shall have been regenerated by a new birth - oh! this could not be permitted to stand in Mary's way, her Son forbade it.

The eternal Father would not do less for the second Eve than He had done for the first, who was created, as was also the first Adam, in the state of original justice, which she afterwards forfeited by sin. The Son of God would not permit that the woman, from whom He was to take the nature of Man, should be deprived of that gift which He had given even to her [Eve] who was the mother of sin. The Holy Ghost, Who was to overshadow Mary and produce Jesus within her by His Divine operation, would not permit that foul stain, in which we are all conceived, to rest, even for an instant, on this His Bride. All men were to contract the sin of Adam; the sentence was universal; but God's Own Mother is not included. God Who is the author of that law, God Who was free to make it as He willed, had power to exclude from it her whom He had predestined to be His Own in so many ways; He could exempt her, and it was just that He should exempt her; therefore, He did it.

Was it not this grand exemption which God Himself foretold, when the guilty pair, whose children we all are, appeared before Him in the Garden of Eden? In the anathema which fell upon the serpent, there was included a promise of mercy to us. “I will put enmities,” said the Lord, “between thee and the Woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.” [Gen. 3:15] Thus was salvation promised the human race under the form of a victory over Satan; and this victory is to be

gained by the Woman, and she will gain it for us also. Even granting, as some read this text, that it is the Son of the Woman that is alone to gain this victory, the enmity between the Woman and the serpent is clearly expressed, and She, the Woman, with her own foot, is to crush the head of the hated serpent. The second Eve is to be worthy of the second Adam, conquering and not to be conquered. The human race is one day to be avenged not only by God, made Man, but also by the Woman miraculously exempted from every stain of sin, in whom the primeval creation, which was in justice and holiness [Eph 4:24] will thus reappear, just as though the Original Sin had never been committed.

Raise up your heads, then, ye children of Adam, and shake off your chains! This day the humiliation which weighed you down is annihilated. Behold! Mary, who is of the same flesh and blood as yourselves, has seen the torrent of sin, which swept along all the generations of mankind, flow back at her presence and not touch her: the infernal dragon has turned away his head, not daring to breathe his venom upon her; the dignity of your origin is given to her in all its primitive grandeur. This happy day, then, on which the original purity of your race is renewed, must be a feast to you. The second Eve is created; and from her own blood (which, with the exception of the element of sin, is the same as that which makes you to be the children of Adam), she is shortly to give you the God-Man, Who proceeds from her according to the flesh, as He proceeds from the Father according to the eternal generation.

And how can we do less than admire and love the incomparable purity of Mary in her Immaculate Conception, when we hear even God, Who thus prepared her to become His Mother, saying to her, in the Divine Canticle, these words of complacent love: “Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee!” [Cant. 4:7] It is the God of all holiness that here speaks; that eye, which sees all things, finds not a vestige, not a shadow of sin; therefore does He delight in her, and admire in her that gift of His Own condescending munificence. We cannot be surprised after this, that Gabriel, when he came down from Heaven to announce the Incarnation to her, should be full of admiration at the sight of that purity, whose beginning was so glorious and whose progress was immeasurable; and that this blessed spirit should bow down profoundly before this young Maid of Nazareth, and salute her with, “Hail, O full of grace!” [Luke 1:28] And who is this Gabriel? An Archangel, that lives amidst the grandest magnificences of God's creation,

amidst all the gorgeous riches of Heaven; who is brother to the Cherubim and Seraphim, to the Thrones and Dominations; whose eye is accustomed to gaze on those nine angelic choirs with their dazzling brightness of countless degrees of light and grace; he has found on earth, in a creature of a nature below that of Angels, the fullness of grace, of that grace which had been given to the Angels measuredly. This fullness of grace was in Mary from the very first instant of her existence. She is the future Mother of God, and she was ever holy, ever pure, ever Immaculate.

This truth of Mary's Immaculate Conception - which was revealed to the Apostles by the Divine Son of Mary, inherited by the Church, taught by the holy fathers, believed by each generation of the Christian people with an ever increasing explicitness - was implied in the very notion of a Mother of God. To believe that Mary was Mother of God, was implicitly to believe that she, on whom this sublime dignity was conferred, had never been defiled with the slightest stain of sin, and that God had bestowed upon her an absolute exception from sin. But now the Immaculate Conception of Mary rests on an explicit definition dictated by the Holy Ghost. Peter has spoken by the mouth of Pius; and when Peter has spoken, every Christian should believe; for the Son of God has said: "I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not." [Luke 22:32] And again: "The Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." [John 14:26]

The Symbol of our faith has therefore received not a new truth, but a new light on a truth which was previously the object of the universal belief. On that great day of the definition, the infernal serpent was again crushed beneath the victorious foot of the Virgin-Mother, and the Lord graciously gave us the strongest pledge of His mercy. He still loves this guilty earth, since He has deigned to enlighten it with one of the brightest rays of His Mother's glory. How this earth of ours exulted! The present generation will never forget the enthusiasm with which the entire universe received the tidings of the definition. It was an event of mysterious importance which thus marked this second half of our century; and we shall look forward to the future with renewed confidence; for if the Holy Ghost bids us tremble for the days when truths are diminished among the children of men, He would, consequently, have us look on those times as blessed by God in which we receive an increase of truth; an increase both in light and authority.

The Church, even before the solemn proclamation of the grand dogma, kept the feast of this eighth day of December; which was, in reality, a profession of her faith. It is true that the feast was not called the Immaculate Conception, but simply the Conception of Mary. But the fact of such a feast being instituted and kept, was an unmistakable expression of the faith of Christendom in that truth. St. Bernard and the angelical doctor, St. Thomas, both teach that the Church cannot celebrate the feast of what is not holy; the Conception of Mary, therefore, was holy and immaculate, since the Church has, for ages past, honored it with a special feast. The Nativity of the same holy Virgin is kept as a solemnity in the Church, because Mary was born full of grace; therefore, had the first moment of Mary's existence been one of sin, as is that of all the other children of Adam, it never could have been made the subject of the reverence of the Church. Now, there are few feasts so generally and so firmly established in the Church as this which we are keeping today.

On Praying to Our Lady

by F.J. Sheed

The Catholic prays to Our Lady, but not as he prays to God. Following the four-fold division of prayer, we can see the difference.

-Adoration - which for the Christian is a compound of supreme homage, supreme love - is for God alone as the Infinite Being upon Whom all things and all persons [including Our Lady] depend. But all God's works are good with the goodness He has given them and we honour Him by honoring them: the more goodness He has given them, the better they mirror His Own infinite perfection, the more honour, veneration, we give them. Our Lady is His master-work: we honour her more than any other of the creatures of God: and we tell her so. God loves her more than He loves any other creature He has made-because she has more goodness in her, because she loves Him better. God loves her more; so do we, and we tell her that, too.

-Thanksgiving - all good gifts are from God. We thank Him primarily. But, under God, human beings can give us good gifts too. We thank them secondarily. No creature ever gave us so good a gift as the Virgin who gave us Christ: whenever we remember that gift, we remember our gratitude to her: it would be churlish not to tell her so. We do tell her so. There are other gifts from her to us, as we shall see in a moment. We thank her for those too.

-Sorrow for Sin - we confess our sinfulness to God, for it is only because sins offend Him that they are sins, and it is only He Who can forgive them. But we confess our sinfulness to Our Lady too. Why? Because our sins caused the bitter suffering of her Son on the Cross. There is another reason. Listen to the Confiteor, as the priest says it at Mass:

I confess to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary Ever-Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, Blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the Saints and you, brethren, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.

Once we have confessed to God, as we do in the first clause, what is the point of confessing to those others? The Confiteor concludes:

Therefore I beseech the Blessed Mary Ever-Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, Blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the

Saints and you brethren, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

-Petition - only God can forgive our sins. Only God can give us any good, spiritual or material. But God will give them to one person because another has asked Him to. So we ask Our Lady to pray to God that we may not be destroyed by our sins - and we ask not only Our Lady but Michael and John and Peter and Paul and all the Saints: and not only all the Saints but all the sinners too - everyone can pray for others; everyone's prayer can profit others.

We know this by one totally conclusive fact - that when Our Lord gave us the prayer that was to be the model of all prayers, He put it in the plural: not "give me this day my daily bread, forgive me my trespasses ...deliver me from evil," but give *us*, forgive *us*, deliver *us*. By Our Lord's instruction, a man prays for bread, forgiveness, deliverance, not for himself only *but for others*. Therefore [to put it mathematically] one man's prayer may help others to obtain material and spiritual good. Therefore we ask others to pray for us. So did St. Paul. For instance, he asked his converts to pray for him, that he might be delivered from importunate and evil men [2 Thess. 3: 1]. Nor does this take anything from the one mediatorship of Christ. Indeed St. Paul [1 Tim. 2] uses the fact that "there is one mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus" as a reason why we should pray for one another: because man and God are thus linked by Christ, man's prayers can avail with God.

There is an organic principle involved. Christians are members of one body, the Mystical Body of Christ, and the strength of one can avail for the weakness of another. On a lesser but still real level, all men are linked in the brotherhood of the human race. In showing us that we are to pray for one another and seek one another's prayers. God is reminding us of that double solidarity.

The last word hardly needs saying. If any person's prayers have power with God, Our Lady's has - for she is the holiest of God's creatures and so the most pleasing to God - and she is the Mother of all men and so most ready to come to men's aid.

The Rosary: Historically Established by St. Dominic

The “Rosary” is a prayer that is, at the very least, 900 years old, if not older. In recent times, the word “Rosary” has become a common term used in place of “The Psalter” (a briefer way to say “The Angelic Psalter”), which is comprised of 15 decades while meditating on three mysteries of Christ’s life. By the year 1912, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* explained:

"The Rosary," says the Roman Breviary, "is a certain form of prayer wherein we say fifteen decades or tens of Hail Marys with an Our Father between each ten, while at each of these fifteen decades we recall successively in pious meditation one of the mysteries of our Redemption." The same lesson for the Feast of the Holy Rosary informs us that when the Albigensian heresy was devastating the country of Toulouse, St. Dominic earnestly besought the help of Our Lady and was instructed by her, so tradition asserts, to preach the Rosary among the people as an antidote to heresy and sin. From that time forward this manner of prayer was "most wonderfully published abroad and developed [promulgari augerique coepit] by St. Dominic whom different Supreme Pontiffs have in various past ages of their apostolic letters declared to be the institutor and author of the same devotion." That many popes have so spoken is undoubtedly true, and amongst the rest we have a series of encyclicals, beginning in 1883, issued by **Pope Leo XIII**, which, while commending this devotion to the faithful in the most earnest terms, **assumes the institution of the Rosary by St. Dominic to be a fact historically established.** (Thurston, Herbert, and Andrew Shipman. "The Rosary." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912)

Roses and Prayers

by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen

The following text was presented by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen in his speech given on February 11, 1951 (Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes). At Lourdes, France, in the year 1858, the Virgin Mary appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous, who was 14 years of age. When asked her name, the Lady clasped

her hands together as her eyes looked heavenward and she responded, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

No human who has ever sent roses to a friend in token of affection, or ever received them with gladness, will be alien to the story of prayer. And a deep instinct in humanity makes it associate roses with joy. Pagan peoples crowned their statues with roses as symbols of their own hearts. The faithful of the early Church substituted prayers for roses. In the days of the early Martyrs - "early" because the Church has more Martyrs today than it had in the first four centuries - as the young virgins marched over the sands of the Coliseum into the jaws of death, they clothed themselves in festive robes and wore on their heads a crown of roses, bedecked, fittingly, to meet the King of Kings in Whose name they would die. The faithful, at night, would gather up these crowns of roses and say their prayers on them - one prayer for each rose. Far away in the desert of Egypt the anchorites and hermits were also counting their prayers, but in the form of little grains or pebbles strung together into a crown --- a practice which Mohammed took for his Moslems. From this custom of offering spiritual bouquets arose a series of prayers known as the Rosary, for Rosary means "crown of roses."

Not always the same prayers were said on the Rosary. In the Eastern Church there was a Rosary called the *Acathist* (Akathistos), which is a liturgical hymn recited in any position except sitting. It combined a long series of invocations to the Mother of Our Lord, held together by a scene from the Life of Our Lord on which one meditated while saying the prayers. In the Western Church, St. Brigit of Ireland used a Rosary made up of the *Hail Mary* and the *Our Father*. Finally, the Rosary as we know it today began to take shape.

From the earliest days, the Church asked its faithful to recite the one hundred and fifty *Psalms of David*. This custom still prevails among priests, who recite some of these *Psalms* every day. But it was not easy for anyone to memorize the one hundred and fifty *Psalms*. Then, too, before the invention of printing, it was difficult to procure a book. That is why certain important books like the Bible had to be chained like telephone books; otherwise people would have run off with them. Incidentally, this gave rise to the stupid lie that the Church would not allow anyone to read the Bible, because it was chained. The fact is it was chained so people could read it. The telephone book is chained, too, but it is more consulted than any book in modern civilization!

The people who could not read the one hundred and fifty *Psalms* wanted to do something to make up for it. So they substituted one hundred and fifty *Hail Marys*. They broke up these one hundred and fifty, in the manner of the *Acathist*, into fifteen decades, or series of ten. Each part was to be said while meditating on a different aspect of the Life of Our Lord. To keep the decades separate, each one of them began with the Our Father and ended with the Doxology of Praise to the Trinity. St. Dominic, who died in 1221, received from the Blessed Mother the command to preach and to popularize this devotion for the good of souls, for conquest over evil, and for the prosperity of Holy Mother Church and thus gave us the Rosary in its present classical form.

Practically all the prayers of the Rosary, as well as the details of the Life of Our Saviour on which one meditates while saying it, are to be found in the Scriptures. The first part of the *Hail Mary* is nothing but the words of the Angel to Mary; the next part, the words of Elizabeth to Mary on the occasion of her visit. The only exception is the last part of the *Hail Mary*, namely, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen." This was not introduced until the latter part of the Middle Ages. Since it seizes upon the two decisive moments of life: "Now, and at the hour of our death," it suggests the spontaneous outcry of people in a great calamity. The Black Death, which ravaged all Europe and wiped out one-third of its population, prompted the faithful to cry out to the Mother of Our Lord to protect them, at a time when the present moment and death were almost one.

The Black Death has ended. But now the Red Death of Communism is sweeping the earth. In keeping with the spirit of adding something to this prayer when evil is intensified, I find it interesting that, when the Blessed Mother appeared at Fatima in 1917 because of the great decline in morals and the advent of godlessness, she asked that, after the "Glory be to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," we add, **"O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need of Thy mercy."**

It is objected that there is much repetition in the Rosary because the *Lord's Prayer* and the *Hail Mary* are said so often; therefore it is monotonous. That reminds me of a woman who came to see me one evening after instructions. She said, "I would never become a Catholic. You say the

same words in the Rosary over and over again, and anyone who repeats the same words is never sincere. I would never believe anyone who repeated his words, and neither would God." I asked her who the man was with her. She said he was her fiancé.

I asked: "Does he love you?"

"Certainly, he does."

"But how do you know?"

"He told me."

"What did he say?"

"He said: 'I love you.' "

"When did he tell you last?"

"About an hour ago."

"Did he tell you before?"

"Yes, last night."

"What did he say?"

"'I love you.' "

"But never before?"

"He tells me every night."

I said: "Do not believe him. He is repeating; he is not sincere."

The beautiful truth is that there is no repetition in, "I love you." Because there is a new moment of time, another point in space, the words do not mean the same as they did at another time or space. A mother says to her son: "You are a good boy." She may have said it ten thousand times before, but each time it means something different; the whole personality goes out to it anew, as a new historical circumstance summons forth a new outburst of affection. Love is never monotonous in the uniformity of its expression. The mind is infinitely variable in its language, but the heart is not. The heart of a man, in the face of the woman he loves, is too poor to translate the infinity of his affection into a different word. So the heart takes one expression, "I love you," and in saying it over and over again, it never repeats. It is the only real news in the universe. That is what we do when we say the Rosary, we are saying to God, the Trinity, to the Incarnate Saviour, to the Blessed Mother: "I love you, I love you, I love you." Each time it means something different

because, at each decade, our mind is moving to a new demonstration of the Savior's love: for example, from the mystery of His Love which willed to become one of us in His Incarnation, to the other mystery of love when He suffered for us, and on to the other mystery of His Love where He intercedes for us before the Heavenly Father. And who shall forget that Our Lord Himself in the moment of His greatest agony repeated, three times within an hour, the same prayer?

The beauty of the Rosary is that it is not merely a vocal prayer. It is also a mental prayer. One sometimes hears a dramatic presentation in which, while the human voice is speaking, there is a background of beautiful music, giving force and dignity to the words. The Rosary is like that. While the prayer is being said, the heart is not hearing music, but it is meditating on the Life of Christ all over again, applied to his own life and his own needs. As the wire holds the beads together, so meditation holds the prayers together. We often speak to people while our minds are thinking of something else. But in the Rosary, we not only say prayers, we think them. Bethlehem, Galilee, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Golgotha, Calvary, Mount Olivet, Heaven - all these move before our mind's eye as our lips pray. The stained-glass windows in a Church invite the eye to dwell on thoughts about God. The Rosary invites our fingers, our lips, and our heart in one vast symphony of prayer, and for that reason is the greatest prayer ever composed by man. The Rosary has a special value to many groups: (1) the worried, (2) the intellectual and the unlearned, (3) the sick.

1. The Worried. Worry is a want of harmony between the mind and the body. Worried people invariably keep their minds too busy and their hands too idle. God intended that the truths we have in our mind should work themselves out in action. "The Word became flesh" - such is the secret of a happy life. But in mental distress, the thousand and one thoughts find no order or solace within and no escape without. In order to overcome this mental indigestion, psychiatrists have taught soldiers suffering from war shock how to knit and do handicrafts, in order that the pent-up energy of their minds might flow out through the busy extremities of their fingers.

This is, indeed, helpful, but it is only a part of the cure. Worries and inner distress cannot be overcome by keeping the hands alone busy. There must be a contact with a new source of Divine Energy and the development of confidence and trust in a Person Whose essence is Love. Could worried

souls be taught the love of the Good Shepherd Who cares for the wayward sheep, so that they would put themselves into that new area of love - all their fears and anxieties would banish. But that is difficult. Concentration is impossible when the mind is troubled; thoughts run helter-skelter; a thousand and one images flood across the mind; distracted and wayward, the spiritual seems a long way off. The Rosary is the best therapy for these distraught, unhappy, fearful, and frustrated souls, precisely because it involves the simultaneous use of three powers: the physical, the vocal, and the spiritual, and in that order. The fingers, touching the beads, are reminded that these little counters are to be used for prayer. This is the physical suggestion of prayer. The lips move in unison with the fingers. This is a second or vocal suggestion of prayer. The Church, a wise psychologist, insists that the lips move while saying the Rosary, because She knows that the external rhythm of the body can create a rhythm of the soul. If the fingers and the lips keep at it, the spiritual will soon follow, and the prayer will eventually end in the heart.

The beads help the mind to concentrate. They are almost like the self-starter of a motor; after a few spits and spurts, the soul soon gets going. Every airplane must have a runway before it can fly. What the runway is to the airplane, that the Rosary beads are to prayer - the physical start to gain spiritual altitude. The very rhythm and sweet monotony induce a physical peace and quiet and create an affective fixation on God. The physical and the mental work together if we give them a chance. Stronger minds can work from the mind outward; but worried minds have to work from the outside inward. With the spiritually trained, the soul leads the body; with most people, the body has to lead the soul. Little by little the worried, as they say the Rosary, see that all their worries stemmed from their egotism. No normal mind yet has ever been overcome by worries or fears who was faithful to the Rosary. You will be surprised how you can climb out of your worries, bead by bead, up to the very throne of the Heart of Love Itself.

2. The Intellectual and the Unlearned. The spiritual advantages which one derives from the Rosary depend upon two factors: first, the understanding that one has of the joys, sorrows, and glory in the Life of Christ; and second, the fervor and love with which one prays. Because the Rosary is both a mental and a vocal prayer, it is one where intellectual elephants may bathe, and the simple birds may also sip.

It happens that the simple often pray better than the learned, not because the intellect is prejudicial to prayer, but because, when it begets pride, it destroys the spirit of prayer. One always ought to love according to knowledge, for Wisdom and Love of the Trinity are equal. But as husbands who know they have good wives do not always love according to that knowledge, so too the philosopher does not always pray as he should, and thus his knowledge becomes sterile .

The Rosary is a great test of faith. What the Eucharist is in the order of Sacraments, that the Rosary is in the order of sacramentals - the mystery and the test of faith - the touchstone by which the soul is judged in its humility. The mark of the Christian is the willingness to look for the Divine in the flesh of a babe in a crib, the continuing Christ under the appearance of bread on an altar, and a meditation and a prayer on a string of beads.

The more one descends to humility, the deeper becomes the faith. The Blessed Mother thanked her Divine Son because He had looked on her lowliness. The world starts with what is big, the spirit begins with the little, aye, with the trivial! The faith of the simple can surpass that of the learned, because the intellectual often ignore those humble means to devotion, such as medals, pilgrimages, statues, and Rosaries. As the rich, in their snobbery, sneer at the poor, so the intelligentsia, in their sophistication, jeer at the lowly. One of the last acts of Our Lord was to wash the feet of His Disciples, after which He told them that Out of such humiliation true greatness is born.

When it comes to love, there is no difference between the intellectual and the simple. They resort to the same token of affection and the same delicate devices, such as the keeping of a flower, the treasuring of a handkerchief or a paper with a scribbled message. Love is the only equalizing force in the world; all differences are dissolved in the great democracy of affection. It is only when men cease to love that they begin to act differently. Then it is that they spurn the tiny little manifestations of affection which make love grow.

But if the simple and the intellectual love, in the human order, in the same way, then they should also love God in the Divine order, in the same way. The educated can explain love better than the simple, but they have no richer experience of it. The theologian may know more about the Divinity of Christ, but he may not vitalize it in his life as well as the simple. As it is by the simple gesture of love that the wise man enters into the understanding of love, so it is by the simple acts of piety that the educated also enter into the

knowledge of God.

The Rosary is the meeting ground of the uneducated and the learned; the place where the simple love grows in knowledge and where the knowing mind grows in love. As Maeterlinck has said: "The thinker continues to think justly, only if he does not lose contact with those who do not think at all!"

3. The Sick. The third great value of the Rosary is for the sick. When fever mounts and the body aches, the mind cannot read; it hardly wants to be spoken to, but there is much in its heart it yearns to tell. Since the number of prayers one knows by heart is very limited, and their very repetition becomes wearisome in sickness, it is well for the sick to have a form of prayer in which the words focus or spearhead a meditation. As the magnifying glass catches and unites the scattered rays of the sun, so the Rosary brings together the otherwise dissipated thoughts of life in the sickroom: into the white and burning heat of Divine Love.

When a person is healthy, his eyes, are, for the most part, looking to the earth; when he is flat on his back, his eyes look to Heaven. Perhaps it is truer to say that Heaven looks down on him. In such moments when fever, agony, and pain make it hard to pray, the suggestion of prayer that comes from merely holding the Rosary is tremendous - or better still, caressing the Crucifix at the end of it. Because our prayers are known by heart, the heart can now pour them out, and thus fulfill the Scriptural injunction to "pray always." Prisoners of war during the last World War have told me how the Rosary enabled men to pray, almost continuously, for days before their death. The favorite mysteries then were generally the sorrowful ones, for by meditating on the suffering of Our Saviour on the Cross, men were inspired to unite their pains with Him, so that, sharing in His Cross, they might also share in His Resurrection.

The Rosary is the book of the blind, where souls see and there enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known; it is the book of the simple, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the book of the aged, whose eyes close upon the shadow of this world, and open on the substance of the next. The power of the Rosary is beyond description. And here I am reciting concrete instances, which I know. Young people, in danger of death through accident, have had miraculous recoveries --- a mother, despaired of in childbirth, was saved with the child --- alcoholics became temperate --- dissolute lives became

spiritualized --- fallen-aways returned to the faith --- the childless were blessed with a family --- soldiers were preserved during battle --- mental anxieties were overcome --- and pagans were converted.

I know of a Jew who, in World War I, was in a shell hole on the Western Front with four Austrian soldiers. Shells had been bursting on all sides. Suddenly, one shell killed his four companions. He took a Rosary from the hands of one of them and began to say it. He knew it by heart, for he had heard others say it so often. At the end of the first decade, he felt an inner warning to leave that shell hole. He crawled through much mud and muck, and threw himself into another. At that moment a shell hit the first hole, where he had been lying. Four more times, exactly the same experience; four more warnings, and four times his life was saved! He promised then to give his life to Our Lord and to His Blessed Mother if he should be saved. After the war more sufferings came to him; his family was burned by Hitler, but his promise lingered on. Recently, I baptized him - and the grateful soldier is now preparing to study for the priesthood.

All the idle moments of one's life can be sanctified, thanks to the Rosary. As we walk the streets, we pray with the Rosary hidden in our hand or in our pocket; driving an automobile, the little knobs under most steering wheels can serve as counters for the decades. While waiting to be served at a lunchroom, or waiting for a train, or in a store; or while playing dummy at bridge; or when conversation or a lecture lags - all these moments can be sanctified and made to serve inner peace, thanks to a prayer that enables one to pray at all times and under all circumstances. If you wish to convert anyone to the fullness of the knowledge of Our Lord and of His Mystical Body, then teach him the Rosary. One of two things will happen. Either he will stop saying the Rosary - or he will get the gift of faith.

VARIOUS PRAYERS IN HONOR OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

The Psalter and the Symbolic Number 153

Since Our Lady chose flowers, including Castilian roses, as one of her signs for the Bishop, what better “flower” to offer her then praying the daily Rosary, “the crown of roses”?

As Bishop Fulton Sheen explained, the Rosary is a prayer of many centuries. It is at least 900 years since Our Lady instructed St. Dominic, “Preach my Psalter” in order to defeat the Albigensian heresy. In this way, the Virgin “codified” what had been, up to that point, the organic growth of the Psalter. By St. Dominic’s time, the “Psalter” had reached its maturity and would grow no more, which is proven by the Virgin’s simple words to the saint, “Preach my Psalter.” To the Psalter, Our Lady made no additions.

Properly speaking (and as Bishop Sheen also explained), the Angelic Psalter is comprised of 15 decades (150 Hail Mary’s) which follow the number pattern of the *Psalms of David*. In the Psalter, the total number of Hail Mary’s prayed are 153, because there are 3 “introductory” Hail Mary’s in which the faithful ask God, through the intercession of the Virgin, for an increase in the virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

Furthermore, 153 is the symbolic number of the Church, which cannot offer redemption to souls without Christ. The Church Fathers understood this about the number 153 from the Gospel of St. John, wherein the Apostle relates the third appearance of Christ after His resurrection. St. Peter decided to go fishing and eight disciples decided to join him. All night they labored but they had no success. When the morning came (presumably a reference to the daybreak, like the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe), a man appeared and asked them, “Children, have you any meat? They answered him: No.” (John 21:5) In other words, the man (who was Christ) asked if they were successful in their fishing but, even though they labored together, they had to answer in the negative.

He instructed them to again cast their nets on the *right* side of the ship into the lake. (Our Lord sits on the right side of His Father in heaven.) St.

John says at this instruction he immediately recognized Jesus, and he spoke aside to St. Peter, telling him it was the Lord. This last section of St. John's Gospel is incredibly full in doctrinal teaching: "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, **one hundred and fifty-three**. And although there were so many, the net was not broken." (John 21:11) The entire section is clear that Peter is the head of the Church, that the other disciples must work in accordance with him, and that a rich harvest of souls awaits - but that no work is fruitful without Christ. The Scriptures are clear that the number 153 is symbolic of the Church, established by Christ and which He builds through Peter. It was, after all, Peter who pulled up the 153 fish. This is why the Psalter of Our Lady is comprised of 153 Hail Mary's, and why the Psalter is a meditation on the entire work of Redemption, offered by Jesus Christ Our Lord and made possible by the cooperation of the Virgin Mary, who is called "the *cause* of our salvation."

A Rosary, as we call it now, is one-third of the Psalter. Heaven asked for no changes to the Psalter until Our Lady of Fatima instructed a small addition at the end of each Rosary decade, the "O my Jesus" prayer. This prayer is not a radical change to the Psalter; in fact, it can be likened to the budding of a flower on a mystical tree that has stood for ages.

THE ROSARY MYSTERIES

The Joyful Mysteries (Monday and Thursday)

- First Joyful Mystery - The Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary
- Second Joyful Mystery - The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth
- Third Joyful Mystery - The Birth of Jesus
- Fourth Joyful Mystery - The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple
- Fifth Joyful Mystery - Finding Jesus in the Temple

The Sorrowful Mysteries (Tuesday and Friday; also, on all Sundays of Advent and Lent)

- First Sorrowful Mystery - Agony of Jesus in the Garden
- Second Sorrowful Mystery - Jesus is Scourged at the Pillar
- Third Sorrowful Mystery - Jesus is Crowned with Thorns
- Fourth Sorrowful Mystery - Jesus Carries His Cross
- Fifth Sorrowful Mystery - The Crucifixion of Jesus

The Glorious Mysteries (Wednesday and Saturday; also on all Sundays after Easter, inclusive – but not on Sundays during Advent and Lent because they are penitential seasons of the Church)

- First Glorious Mystery - The Resurrection of Jesus
- Second Glorious Mystery - The Ascension of Jesus
- Third Glorious Mystery - The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
- Fourth Glorious Mystery - The Assumption of Mary into Heaven
- Fifth Glorious Mystery - The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth

HOW TO PRAY THE ROSARY

1. While holding the Crucifix, make the **Sign of the Cross** and pray: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

While still holding the Crucifix, also pray the **Apostles Creed**:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.

2. Pray the **Our Father** on the first large bead.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

3. Pray the **Hail Mary** on each of the next three beads, asking for an increase in the virtues of faith, hope and charity.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

4. Pray the **Gloria** on the next large bead.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

5. Announce the first Rosary **Mystery** and pray the **Our Father** on the next large bead.

6. On each of the adjacent ten small beads (also referred to as a decade) recite a **Hail Mary** while reflecting on the mystery.

7. At the end of the mystery, pray the **Fatima Prayer** requested by the Virgin.

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those with the greatest need of Thy mercy.

8. On the next large bead between the decades pray the **Gloria**.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

9. Repeat all the steps above for each mystery.

10. When the fifth mystery is completed, again pray the Fatima **Prayer** and the **Gloria**. The Rosary is then customarily concluded with the **Hail, Holy Queen**, followed by the prayer to God and then three prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father. This last part is just as important, since the prayers for the Pope complete the requirements to gain a plenary indulgence. Customarily, the three prayers are one *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, and one *Gloria*.

Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary!

Pray for us, o holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant we beseech Thee that by meditating upon these mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise. Through the same Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Then state “For the intentions of the Holy Father and to ask for the plenary indulgence” (acquired when praying a Rosary with the family, in a church group, etc.). If praying privately, this sentence can still be said aloud. What is necessary is that the three following prayers should be offered with the explicit purpose of praying for the current Pope’s intentions (that is to say, to

offer prayers so that he may fulfill the duties of the papal office in accordance with God's most holy Will):

One *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, one *Gloria*.

MEMORARE TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Composed by Helen Behrens (one of the Guadalupe experts earlier mentioned in this work). In 1956, it was printed for the first time in the English language, in Mexico City, and with ecclesiastical approval.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary of Guadalupe,
that in thy celestial apparitions on the mount of Tepeyac,
thou didst promise to show thy compassion and pity towards all who,
loving and trusting thee,
seek thy help and call upon thee
in their necessities and afflictions.

Thou didst promise to hearken to our supplications,
to dry our tears and to give us consolation and relief.
Never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help, or sought thy intercession,
either for the common welfare, or in personal anxieties,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence, we fly unto thee,
O Mary, ever Virgin Mother of the True God!
Though grieving under the weight of our sins,
we come to prostrate ourselves in thy august presence,
certain that thou wilt deign to fulfill thy merciful promises.

We are full of hope that,
standing beneath thy shadow and protection,
nothing will trouble or afflict us,
nor need we fear illness,
or misfortune,
or any other sorrow.

Thou hast decided to remain with us
through thy admirable image,
thou who art our Mother,

our health and our life.

Placing ourselves beneath thy maternal gaze

and having recourse to thee

in all our necessities

we need do nothing more.

O Holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions,

but in thy mercy hear and answer us.

[Here mention your petition.]

Conclusion of this prayer: Five *Hail Mary*'s in thanksgiving to God for the four apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Juan Diego and the one apparition to his uncle, Juan Bernardino.

PRAYER TO THE PERPETUAL VIRGIN
Mother of God and Mother of the of the Church

O Immaculate Virgin, Mother of the true God and Mother of the Church, who revealed your clemency and your pity to all those who ask for your protection, hear the prayer that we address to you with filial trust, and present it to your Son Jesus, our sole Redeemer.

Mother of Mercy, Teacher of hidden and silent sacrifice, to you, who come to meet us sinners, we dedicate on this day all our being and all our love. We also dedicate to you our life, our work, our joys, our infirmities and our sorrows. Grant peace, justice and prosperity to our peoples; for we entrust to your care all that we have and all that we are, our Lady and Mother. We wish to be entirely yours and to walk with you along the way of complete faithfulness to Jesus Christ in His Church; hold us always with your loving hand.

Virgin of Guadalupe, Mother of the Americas, we pray to you for all the Bishops, that they may lead the faithful along paths of intense Christian life, of love and humble service of God and souls. Contemplate this immense harvest, and intercede with the Lord that He may instill a hunger for holiness in the whole people of God, and grant abundant vocations of priests and religious, strong in the faith and zealous dispensers of God's mysteries.

Grant to our homes the grace of loving and respecting life in its beginnings, with the same love with which you conceived in your womb the life of the Son of God. Blessed Virgin Mary, protect our families, so that they may always be united, and bless the upbringing of our children.

Our hope, look upon us with compassion, teach us to go continually to Jesus and, if we fall, help us to rise again, to return to Him, by means of the confession of our faults and sins in the Sacrament of Penance, which gives peace to the soul.

We beg you to grant us a great love for all the holy Sacraments, which are, as it were, the signs that your Son left us on earth.

Thus, Most Holy Mother, with the peace of God in our conscience, with our hearts free from evil and hatred, we will be able to bring to all true joy and true peace, which come to us from your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIVE DAY NOVENA TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

-Day One-

Immaculate and Perpetual Virgin of Guadalupe, you appeared on Mount Tepeyac to reconcile mankind to God. Plead and intercede with your Son Jesus today, that a bond of Holy Love is formed between all humanity and God.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

-Day Two-

Immaculate and Perpetual Virgin of Guadalupe, you left Your Image on the cloak of Juan Diego, using a humble vessel to bring your grace into the world. Imprint on our hearts the virtue of humility, dear Mother, and use us to bring others to you.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

-Day Three-

Immaculate and Perpetual Virgin of Guadalupe, your Image of Guadalupe was a symbolic story to the Aztecs, converting them from paganism to Christianity. Pray for us, dear Mother, that our lives will be symbols of Holy Love, converting those around us.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

-Day Four-

Immaculate and Perpetual Virgin of Guadalupe, your Image has remained intact on the frail cactus fiber of the tilma for centuries, free from corruption of the elements of the world. Give to us, dear Mother, a lasting and enduring faith, a faith that will not be compromised by the world.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

-Day Five-

Immaculate and Perpetual Virgin of Guadalupe, you proclaimed Yourself Our Mother and Protectress when you appeared on Mt. Tepeyac. Take us into Your Maternal Heart, dear Mother, and protect our faith.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

NINE DAY NOVENA
TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE #1
One Prayer for Nine Days

The following novena prayer, written by Rev. Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D., was approved by Bishop Burke and updated to state "St." Juan Diego (the only change).

Our Lady of Guadalupe, according to thy message in Mexico I venerate thee as the Virgin Mother of the true God for whom we live, the Creator of all the world, Maker of heaven and earth. In spirit I kneel before thy most holy image which thou didst miraculously imprint upon the cloak of St. Juan Diego, and with the faith of the countless numbers of pilgrims who visit thy shrine, I beg thy for this favor:

[Mention your request].

Remember, O Immaculate Virgin, the words thou hast spoken to thy devout client: "I am a merciful mother to thee and to all thy people who love me and trust in me and invoke my help. I listen to their lamentations and solace all their sorrows and sufferings." I beg thee to be a merciful mother to me, because I sincerely love thee and trust in thee and invoke thy help. I entreat thee, our Lady of Guadalupe, to grant my request, if this should be the will of God, in order that I may bear witness to thy love, thy compassion, thy help and protection. Do not forsake me in my needs.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

Hail Mary three times, in honor of the Holy Trinity.

NINE DAY NOVENA
TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE #2
(Different Prayers for Nine Days)

-First Day-

Dearest Lady of Guadalupe,
Fruitful Mother of holiness,
Teach me your ways

Of gentleness and strength.
Hear my humble prayer
Offered with heartfelt confidence
To beg this favor (State your petition).
Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria.

-Second Day-

O Mary, conceived without sin,
I come to your throne of grace
To share the fervent devotion
Of your faithful Mexican children
Who call to you
Under the glorious title of Guadalupe
Obtain for me a lively faith
To do your Son's holy will always:
May His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria

-Third Day-

O Mary,
Whose Immaculate Heart
Was pierced by seven swords of grief,
Help me to walk valiantly
Amid the sharp thorns
Strewn across my pathway.
Obtain for me the strength
To be a true imitator of you
This I ask you, my dear Mother.
Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria.

-Fourth Day-

Dearest Mother of Guadalupe,
I beg you for a fortified will

To imitate your divine Son's charity,
To always seek the good of others in need
Grant me this, I humbly ask of you.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria.

-Fifth Day-

O most holy Mother,
I beg you to obtain for me
Pardon of all my sins,
Abundant graces to serve your Son
More faithfully from now on,
And lastly, the grace to praise Him
With you forever in heaven.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria.

-Sixth Day-

Mary, Mother of vocations,
Multiply priestly vocations
And fill the earth with religious houses
Which will be light and warmth for the world,
Safety in stormy nights.
Beg your Son to send us
Any priests and religious.
This we ask of you, O Mother.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria.

-Seventh Day-

O Lady of Guadalupe,
We beg you that parents live
A holy life and educate their children
In a Christian manner;
That children obey and follow

The directions of their parents;
That all members of the family
Pray and worship together
This we ask of you, O Mother.
Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria.

-Eighth Day-

With my heart full
Of the most sincere veneration,
I prostrate myself before you, O Mother,
To ask you to obtain for me
The grace to fulfill the duties
Of my state in life
With faithfulness and constancy.
Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria.

-Ninth Day-

O God, You have been pleased
To bestow upon us unceasing favors
By having placed us
Under the special protection
Of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.
Grant us, your humble servants,
Who rejoice in honoring her today upon earth,
The happiness of seeing her face to face in heaven.
Our Father, Hail Mary, Gloria.

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, MYSTICAL ROSE

HISTORY: During an August 15, 1908 audience, Pope St. Pius X approved and enriched the following prayer with an indulgence of five hundred days. It was included in the official edition of approved indulgenced prayers. (Raccolta number 389)

O, Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Mystical rose,
make intercession for Holy Church,
protect the Sovereign Pontiff,
help all those who invoke thee in their necessities,
and since thou art the ever Virgin Mary
and Mother of the true God,
obtain for us from thy most holy Son
the grace of keeping our faith,
sweet hope in the midst of the bitterness of life,
burning charity and the precious gift of final perseverance.
Conclude with one *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, and one *Gloria*.

The following optional prayer may be added or prayed alone:

Dearest Lady,
fruitful Mother of Holiness,
teach me your ways of gentleness and strength.
Hear my prayer,
offered with deep felt confidence to beg this favor...
(State your prayer request here.)

O Mary,
conceived without sin,
I come to your throne of grace
to share the fervent devotion
of your faithful Mexican children

who call to thee under the glorious title "Guadalupe,"
the Virgin who crushed the serpent.

Queen of Martyrs,
whose Immaculate Heart was pierced
by seven swords of grief,
help me to walk valiantly
amid the sharp thorns strewn across my path.

Invoke the Holy Spirit of Wisdom
to fortify my will to frequent the Sacraments so that,
thus enlightened and strengthened,
I may prefer God to all creatures
and shun every occasion of sin.

Help me,
as a living branch of the Vine
that is Jesus Christ,
to exemplify His divine charity
always seeking the good of others.

Queen of Apostles,
aid me to win souls
for the Sacred Heart of my Saviour.

Keep my faith fearless,
dynamic, and articulate,
to proclaim the loving solitude of Our Father in Heaven
so that the wayward may heed His pleading
and obtain pardon,
through the merits of Your Merciful Son,
Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

CHAPLET OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

The Chaplet of Guadalupe includes a cross, 21 beads and a medal. Between the cross and the medal, there is one bead, a set of four beads and then another bead. There then follows four sets of three beads, each separated by one bead (for a total of three lone beads in between the four sets). For those who do not have the chaplet beads, the Chapel as it is presented below makes it easier to keep track of the prayer sets.

OPENING PRAYER

Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Mystical Rose,
make intercession for our Holy Church,
protect the sovereign Pontiff,
help all those who invoke you in their necessities,
and since you are the ever Virgin Mary
and Mother of the true God,
obtain for us from your most Holy Son
the grace of keeping our faith,
of sweet hope in the midst of the bitterness of life,
of burning charity,
and the precious gift of final perseverance.
Amen.

On the first bead: Pray 1 "Our Father." (Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.)

On the set of four beads: Pray 4 times the "Hail Mary" in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe's 4 apparitions to St. Juan Diego and his uncle, Juan Bernardino. (Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our deaths. Amen.)

On the next lone bead: Pray 1 “Gloria” (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.)

Next Part of the Chaplet: There are four sets of 3 beads each, because each set represents one of the four apparitions to St. Juan Diego. (Again, if one does not actually have a chaplet set, the Chaplet prayers can still be prayed.) In each grouping, there are 3 sets of prayers: An “Our Father,” a special prayer in honor of the particular apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and a conclusion of three “Hail Mary’s” and one “Gloria.”

FIRST APPARITION PRAYERS

Meditation: Our Lady of Guadalupe appears to St. Juan Diego as the day is newly breaking. Although Juan recognizes her, she tells him who she is and she sends him on a mission to the local Catholic Church prelate, expressing her command that a church is to be built on Tepeyac, in her name and for the glory of God.

Prayer 1 of First Apparition:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Prayer 2 of First Apparition:

Our Lady of Guadalupe, my Queen and my Mother,
I thank you for your first apparition to St. Juan Diego
when you revealed that you are the Most Pure Virgin,
Mary, Mother of the True God and Mother of all mankind.
I thank you for requesting a temple to be built where you stood,
to bear witness to your love,
your compassion,
your aid and your protection
for all who would love you,
trust you, and invoke your help.

Prayer Set 3 of First Apparition

3 times in succession: Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our deaths. Amen.

1 Gloria

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

SECOND APPARITION PRAYERS

Meditation: Our Lady of Guadalupe gives St. Juan Diego encouragement after his return from the Bishop's house. She promises him that he will be spiritually rewarded for his labors on her behalf.

Prayer 1 of Second Apparition

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Prayer 2 of Second Apparition

Our Lady of Guadalupe, my Queen and my Mother,
I thank you for your second apparition to St. Juan Diego when,
upon his return from the Bishop's house,
he knelt in humiliation and defeat before you
since he was unable to accomplish your mission.
I thank you for the courage and encouragement
you gave to St. Juan Diego
to make a second appeal to the Bishop.

Prayer Set 3 of Second Apparition

3 times in succession: Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our deaths. Amen.

1 Gloria

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

THIRD APPARITION PRAYERS

Meditation: Our Lady of Guadalupe promises a sign to St. Juan Diego for the Bishop. She asks St. Juan to return the next day to receive the sign.

Prayer 1 of Third Apparition

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Prayer 2 of Third Apparition

Our Lady of Guadalupe, my Queen and my Mother,
I thank you for your third apparition to St Juan Diego when,
after this unsuccessful attempt to have a temple built,
you said to him,

“So be it, son.

Return tomorrow in order that you may secure for the Bishop,
the sign for which he has asked.

When this is in your possession,
he will believe you;

he will no longer doubt your word
and suspect your good faith.

Be assured that I shall reward you
for all that you have undergone.”

Prayer Set 3 of Third Apparition

3 times in succession: Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our deaths. Amen.

1 Gloria

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was

in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

FOURTH APPARITION PRAYERS

Meditation: Our Lady of Guadalupe instructs St. Juan to cut and gather the flowers on Tepeyac Hill. Although the cold frost of December had already arrived, the saint finds fragrant, blooming flowers and brings them to the Virgin Mary. She arranges them in St. Juan's tilma and gives him strict instructions to only show the Bishop these flowers. St. Juan obeys her to the letter and Our Lady fulfills her promise of a sign by the heavenly flowers, which included Castilian roses for which the Bishop privately asked her, and by manifesting herself as a Miraculous Image on the tilma.

Prayer 1 of Fourth Apparition

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Prayer 2 of Fourth Apparition

Our Lady of Guadalupe, my Queen and my Mother,
I thank you for your fourth apparition to St. Juan Diego
when you ordered him to pick the flowers
he would find on the summit of the hill
and bring them to you.
I thank you for arranging them
in his tilma when you said,
“This cluster of roses is the sign
that you shall take to the Bishop.
You are to tell him, in my name,
that in this he will recognize my will
and that he must fulfill it.
You will be my ambassador,
wholly worthy of my confidence.
Only in the presence of the Bishop
shall you unfold your mantle

and disclose that which you carry.”
I thank you for your image
printed on the tilma
which appeared when the roses were released.

Prayer Set 3 of Fourth Apparition

3 times: Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our deaths. Amen.

1 Gloria

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

CHAPLET CLOSING PRAYERS

Remember, O most gracious Virgin of Guadalupe,
that in thy celestial apparition on the Mount of Tepeyac,
thou didst promise to show thy compassion
and pity towards all who,
loving and trusting thee,
seek thy help and call upon thee
in their necessities and afflictions;
also to hearken to our supplications,
to dry our tears and to give us consolation and relief.
Inspired with this confidence
we come before thy august presence,
certain that thou wilt deign
to fulfill thy merciful promises.
We are full of hope that,
standing beneath thy protection
nothing will trouble or afflict us.
Thou has desired to remain with us

through thy admirable image,
thou who art our Mother,
our health and our life.
O Mary, Mother of God,
hear our petitions and in thy mercy answer us.
Amen.

Additional Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe (Optional)

Our Lady of Guadalupe, my mother,
into your hands joined in prayer,
take my prayers,
petitions and hopes,
and present them to Jesus for me.
Remembering the love
and care your hands rendered to Him,
He will not refuse what they hold now,
even though they are from me.
Amen.

Before and After the Apparitions and the Miracle: A Chronology

1168 Nahua tribes arrived in the Anahua Valley.

1325 The tenochcas, a few thousand Aztecs, established themselves on an island (the future Mexico City) in Lake Texcoco. Here they saw their sign of destiny: “Perched on a cactus is an eagle devouring a snake.” Today, the eagle devouring a snake is the nation’s coat of arms and is seen on the Mexican flag.

1469 Marriage of Ferdinand II and Isabella. The union of the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile resulted in the formation of the country of Spain.

1474 An Indian named *Cuauhtlatohuac* (“Eagle Who Speaks”) was born in Cuautitlan.

1476 Juan de Zumarraga was born in Spain.

1480 Estimated birth year of Montezuma II.

1492 Christopher Columbus landed on an island in the Americas, naming it San Salvador (Holy Saviour). During the hazardous return voyage, Columbus invoked the protection of the Virgin and promised to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Estremadura, Spain. After his safe return, Columbus kept his promise. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella also visited the Shrine.

1504 Hernando Cortés arrived in the New World.

1505 Montezuma II elected Emperor of the Aztecs. His capital is Tenochtitlan (today’s Mexico City).

1511 Cortés assisted Velazquez in the conquest of Cuba.

1514 The first Marian Shrine in the New World was established in the city of Higuey.

1519 Feb 2: For the Aztecs, this date marked the beginning of the year C-1 Acátl, the year of Quetzalcoátl.

-February 18: Cortés left Havana, Cuba with 100 sailors, 508 soldiers, 10 ships, 16 horses and a great deal of artillery, sailing toward Mexico.

-March 12: Cortés anchored off the coast and named the place Vera Cruz

(True Cross).

-March 25: Cortés won the Battle of Tabasco.

-April 22 (Good Friday): Cortés erected a cross at Vera Cruz. The first Mass is celebrated on Mexican soil.

-September 23: Cortés entered Tlaxcala.

-November 8: Cortés arrived in Tenochtitlan (Mexico City). Emperor Montezuma II, convinced by an ancient legend regarding Quetzalcoátl's return, peacefully received Cortés and soon acknowledged as his own lord Charles V, King of Spain.

-November 14: Cortés placed Emperor Montezuma II under house arrest.

1520 In June, serious battle arose between the Spanish and the Aztecs. Montezuma II was deposed and unjustly murdered. The new Emperor drove out the Spaniards.

1521 Cortés laid siege to Tenochtitlan. After 93 days, he and his troops captured Emperor Cuauhtemoc (Fallen Eagle) near Tlaltelolco. The capital city of the Aztecs fell.

1524 The first 12 Franciscans arrived in Mexico City.

1525 Baptism of the Indian *Cuauhtlatohuac*, his wife *Malitzin*, and the man's uncle. The baptism was administered by a Franciscan priest, whom some think was Fray Toribio de Benavente (better known as Motolinía). The Indian man received the Christian name of Juan Diego, his wife received the name of Maria Lucia, and his uncle received the name Juan Bernardino.

1528 Bishop-elect Juan de Zumárraga, O.F.M., arrived in the New World with the First Audience (of Governors). As the highest ranking Church prelate in the new land, the King of Spain also appointed him as Protector of the Indians. However, Zumárraga would discover that the First Audience would in every way block him and the native peoples.

1529 Juan Diego's wife, Maria, became sick and died.

1531 The Indians were plotting to massacre the Spaniards because the harsh and unjust rule of the First Royal Governors had brought the native people to their breaking point. All of Bishop Zumarraga's pleas on behalf of the people changed nothing. He finally managed to smuggle a report to the Spanish King on the cruelties of the First Royal Governors. At the end of 1531, there was installed the Second Royal Audience which the Spanish King this time

ensured was compromised of fair men.

1531 Saturday December 9 at daybreak: First Apparition of Our Lady to St. Juan Diego at Tepeyac Hill, just outside of Mexico City, who was on his way to Mass in the Virgin's honor. As Juan approached the hill, he heard music and birdsong, and then suddenly silence. A beautiful Lady called him to the top of the hill. Although he recognized her, she told him her identity. She also gave him a message for the Bishop, which Juan was to deliver that day. The Virgin assured Juan that she would reward him for his troubles and anxieties as he carried out her will.

-December 9, much later that day: Second Apparition. As Juan returned home, probably near sunset, Juan found the Lady waiting for him at Tepeyac Hill. Juan sadly told the Virgin that he knew the Bishop did not believe him and asked her to send someone important. The Virgin said she has many servants, but it is necessary that he accomplished this task for her. She encouraged Juan not to despair and told him to return to the Bishop the next day. She repeated her earlier promise that she would richly reward him for all his labors on her behalf (and this she did, for St. Juan used well the riches of graces accorded to him and became a saint).

-Sunday, December 10: Third Apparition. Juan once more took the long trek to Mexico City for Mass and then a visit to the Bishop. After seeing the Bishop a second time, Juan Diego confided to Our Lady that the Bishop had asked for a sign. The Blessed Virgin told Juan to return to her the next morning (a walk of at least 3 hours, in one direction), when she would give him the sign. When he returned to his home, Juan found his uncle, Juan Bernardino, mortally ill.

-Monday, December 11: Caring for his uncle and looking for a healer, Juan was unable to leave for his appointment with the Virgin. After a distressful and exhausting day, his uncle asked Juan Diego to return to Tlaltelolco for a priest to come, hear his confession, and prepare him for death. Juan, who had no rest since his return, immediately set out. It was the middle of the night.

-Tuesday, December 12: Fourth Apparition. As St. Juan took another way around Tepeyac Hill, the Virgin Mary descended from its summit and politely stepped in his way. Juan explained his hurry. Our Lady told him his uncle was already cured and then sent him to the top of Tepeyac, there to gather flowers and bring them to her. She rearranged the flowers in Juan's tilma and strictly commanded him to open the bundle only for the Bishop.

Juan Diego must have waited for 3-4 hours before the servants finally told the Bishop of his return.

-Tuesday, December 12: Fifth Apparition. Unbeknownst to Juan, the Virgin had already appeared to his uncle, Juan Bernardino, and cured him. To Bernardino, Our Lady appeared in the same dress and manner as she did to his nephew. She gave him a mysterious message that when he saw the Bishop (something else he would never expect), he was to tell Zumárraga her command: “Call me and my image the Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, the one who crushes the serpent.” Meanwhile, in Mexico City, the Bishop’s difficult servants finally admitted St. Juan into the residence. The saint explained to the Bishop all that transpired and then opened his tilma to show him the sign of the flowers. Unexpectedly, there was also another sign given, which was the Image of the Virgin impressed upon his cloak. The Bishop immediately ordered work for the little house in honor of the Mother of God on Tepeyac Hill.

December 26: A modest sanctuary, probably made of adobe bricks already made and dried in the previous season, was erected and ready by this date. A solemn translation of the miraculous Image took place. During the ensuing festivities, a young Indian man was accidentally shot in the throat by an arrow. His body was brought before the Image, and the crying and praying people asked for mercy. The young man returned to life in front of thousands.

1533 A larger sanctuary made of adobe (called the Second Hermitage) was built by the native people while Bishop Zumárraga was in Spain.

1539 In the seventh year since Our Lady’s apparitions, at least eight million of the native peoples were converted to the Catholic Faith, which was a direct result of her appearances, her miraculous Image, and the resurrection from the dead of one of their own people.

1540 The earliest year in which Don Antonio Valeriano began writing in Nahuatl the account known as the *Nican Mopohua*. Due to the recent discovery of a document known as the *Codex of 1548*, it is now believed that the *Nican Mopohua* was written in the years between 1548-1555.

1541 Motolinía, Franciscan priest and early historian of New Spain, wrote that, as of this year, nine million Aztecs were baptized and became Christian (meaning Catholic).

1544 Plague (cocolixti) kills 12,000 people in Mexico City alone, including

St. Juan's uncle, Juan Bernardino, who died on May 15 at the age of 86. It is recorded in the *Nican Motecpana* ("Herein are treated," an account of the miracles) that the Virgin came to him in a dream and told him that it was his time to die but that he should be comforted, because she would protect him and conduct him to heaven, since he had long been her dedicated son. The plague ceased after the Franciscan priests led six and seven year old boys and girls (who, at this tender age, were not considered to have reached the age of reason and therefore retained their baptismal innocence) to the shrine of Guadalupe to pray for the epidemic's end.

1548 Juan Diego died at the age of 74, at almost the same time as Bishop Zummáraga.

1556 Don Alonso de Montúfar, O.P., second Archbishop of Mexico, ordered the building of the Third Hermitage (sometimes still called the Second Hermitage), which became known as "The Old Church of the Indians."

1556-1557 Don Fray Alonso de Montúfar canonically established the truth of the appearances of "Our Lady of Guadalupe."

1564 A copy of the Image was carried on the first formal expedition to the Philippine Islands.

1567 The new church ordered by Archbishop Montúfar was completed.

1570 Archbishop Montúfar sent to King Philip II of Spain a complete inventory of the Archbishopric. The inventory mentioned the Hermitage (Chapel) of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Tepeyac, an important listing because later the official record of the apparitions was lost. Montúfar also sent the King an exact copy of the Miraculous Image. The copy was a large oil painting and it was touched to the miraculous Image. This oil painting is also important since it features the alleged "additions" of fur cuffs, stars on the mantle, the moon, the angel, etc. Knowing of the battles with the Ottomans, the Archbishop asked the King to appeal to the Virgin of Guadalupe, who had already granted many favors.

1571 Admiral Doria, gifted by King Phillip II of Spain with the oil painting, was commanded to carry it with him into battle. The Admiral took the beautiful oil painting aboard his ship, retaining it in his cabin. The Pope, the people of Rome, and almost the whole of Christendom were praying the Rosary in the face of the Ottoman (Mohammedan) threat. The Miraculous Image of Guadalupe was on board the Admiral's ship during the Battle of

Lepanto. It is said that, knowing the battle was imminent, Doria prayed the Rosary before this oil painting copy of the Image. Later, the Pope and the people hailed the Rosary and the Virgin of Guadalupe for the victory over the Ottoman Empire forces. The date of the victory (October 7) was first known as Our Lady of Victory, but the name was later changed to Our Lady of the Rosary.

1573 The “Primitive Relation,” discovered in the Mexican National Library archives, was written by the historian Juan de Tovar, who transcribed the story from a still earlier source, probably Juan Gonzalez, Bishop Zumarraga’s translator.

1605 Antonio Valeriano, writer of the original *Nican Mopohua*, died.

1629 September 21: The beginning of the flood in Mexico City, which drowned 30,000 indigenous people and 1,600 Spaniards. At least 27,000 Indians fled. Of an estimated 20,000 Spaniards, only 400 remained in the city. The Image of Guadalupe was transferred by canoe to the cathedral, remaining there until, as the Bishop said, it could return “on foot” (meaning the area was recovered enough so that the Image would not be damaged). The flood continued for four years more.

1634 May 14: In thanksgiving for the flood’s recession, the Virgin’s Image was returned to Tepeyac in solemn procession.

1647 The Image was covered with glass for the first time.

1647-1649 Luis Lasso de la Vega, Vicar of Guadalupe, published his work in Nahuatl, *Huey Tlamahuizoltica*, which included the *Nican Mopohua* written by Antonio Valeriano.

1666 At Tepeyac Hill, work began on a greater sanctuary in honor of Our Lady. Juridical proceedings (Informaciones Canonicas Guadalupenas de 1666) were held in which elderly Indians of Cuauhtitlan (St. Juan Diego’s place of birth) reported the story as they received it from their elders, five of whom had heard it from Juan himself. The formal inquiry and investigation was conducted by the Church from February 18 to March 22 in order to ascertain the oral tradition concerning the Apparitions and the Miracle.

1709 April 27: The great sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe was solemnly dedicated.

1723 The plague struck again, lasting for eight months. Throughout Mexico, an estimated 700,000 persons died. Shortly after Our Lady of Guadalupe was

declared “Patroness of Mexico City,” the plague ceased. Another formal investigation was ordered by Archbishop Lanziego y Eguilaz. December 12 was proclaimed both a holy day and a civil holiday.

1737 The Most Holy Mary of Guadalupe was chosen as the patroness of Mexico City.

1746 The knight Boturini Benaducci promoted the solemn and official coronation of the Image.

1754 April 24: Pope Benedict XIV issued a *bull* approving Our Lady of Guadalupe as Patroness of “New Spain” (Mexico, which then extended from El Salvador to northern California). It was this pope who, when seeing a copy of the miraculous Image, quoted *Psalms* 147: “To no other nation has such a wonder been done.” The Sacred Congregation of Rites issued a decree approving the Office and Mass for Our Lady of Guadalupe, May 25.

1756 Famous painter Miguel Cabrera published his extensive study of the Image in the book “American Marvel.”

1757 The Virgin of Guadalupe was declared patroness of the citizens of Ciudad Ponce in Puerto Rico.

1767 The religious of the Society of Jesus were expelled from the Spanish dominions, and copies of the Image were carried to various parts of the world.

1777 June 1: The Chapel of the Well (El Pocito) was begun by Archbishop Nunez de Haro y Peralto.

1791 Completion of the Chapel of the Well, which is considered to be one of the most beautiful chapels in the world. It is situated on the eastern side of the Plaza de Mexico.

1810 Father Miguel Hidalgo used a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe as the flag at the beginning of the Mexican War of Independence from Spain.

1821 October 12: Emperor Augustin de Iturbide, first Mexican emperor and governor after independence, gave thanks and placed the future of the nation in Our Lady’s hands. He proclaimed her Patroness of the nation and founded the Order of Guadalupe.

1846 Twenty-two Bishops from the United States petitioned Rome to have the Virgin of Guadalupe declared Patroness of their country.

1887 Pope Leo XIII ordered the coronation of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

1894 Pope Leo XIII approved a new Office and Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

1895 October 12: Coronation of the Image by two Archbishops of Mexico. One was the personal delegate of Pope Leo XIII. This coronation included the attendance of a great part of the episcopate of the Americas.

1904 August 24: Pope St. Pius X raised the Shrine of the Virgin to the status of a Basilica.

1908 August 15: Pope Saint Pius X enriched with a 500 days indulgence his prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe, wherein Our Lady of Guadalupe is entrusted with the protection of the Sovereign Pontiff and in which her intercession before God is asked on behalf of the Holy Church and the preservation of the holy Catholic Faith. Pope Saint Pius X also granted indulgences which may be gained in any part of the world for prayer before a copy of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

1910 August 24: Pope Saint Pius X declared Holy Mary of Guadalupe as Patroness of Latin America.

1911 A church was built on the site of Juan Bernardino's home.

1921 November 14: At 10:30 a.m., a bomb hidden in the flowers beneath the Image exploded, causing great damage. Nothing happened to the tilma and nobody was injured or killed.

1924 A very important 16th century source documenting the miracle was found in Peru by anthropologist M. Seville. It is a pictorial calendar known as the *Codex Seville* showing the Image of Our Lady located in the position representing the year 1531.

1926 Jesus Garcia Gutierrez (1875-1958), a Mexican priest, restored the text of the *Nican Mopohua* from various fragments.

1928 A coronation of the Image was made in Santa Fe, Argentina.

1929 Photographer Alfonso Marcue was the first to document an apparent reflection of a man's head in the right eye of the Virgin's Image.

1933 December 10: Coronation of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Rome.

December 12: Solemn Pontifical Mass in St. Peter's. Pope Pius XI renews the proclamation of his predecessor Pope St Pius X that Holy Mary is the Patroness of Latin America.

1935 Pope Pius XI extended the patronage of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the

Philippines.

1945 October 12: Pope Pius XII broadcasted a radio message to Mexico and commemorated the golden anniversary of the coronation of the miraculous Image. He stated that the Virgin of Guadalupe was the “Queen of Mexico and Empress of the Americas” and that she had been painted “by brushes that were not of this world.”

1946 Pope Pius XII declared the Virgin of Guadalupe to be the Patroness of the Americas.

1950 December 12: The Plaza of the Americas, facing the Basilica, was begun and inaugurated on November 25.

1951 Carlos Salinos examined the Image, observing an apparent reflection of a man’s head in the right eye of the Virgin.

1956 Dr. Torroela-Bueno, an ophthalmologist, examined the eyes of the Virgin on the tilma.

1958 Dr. Rafael Torija-Lavoignet published his study of the Purkinje-Sanson effect as exhibited in the eyes of the Image.

1961 Pope John XXIII prayed to the Virgin of Guadalupe as Mother of the Americas. He addressed her as Mother and Teacher of the Faith to the peoples of the Americas.

1962 Dr. Charles Wahlig, O.D. announced the discovery of two Images apparently reflected in the eyes of the Virgin when studying a photograph enlarged twenty-five times. It was also in this year that the Mexican government restored the boulevard, Calzada de Los Misterios, which covers the original causeway on which Juan Diego walked from Tepeyac to the residence of the Bishop.

1966 May 31: Pope Paul VI sent a Golden Rose to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

1970 January 2: Pope Paul VI made a special television broadcast for the people of Mexico. He commemorated the 75th anniversary of the 1895 Coronation of Our Lady as Queen of Mexico and Empress of All the Americas.

1975 Glass was removed so the Image could be examined by ophthalmologist, Dr. Enrique Grave.

1976 Dedication of the new Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, located four miles from central Mexico City.

1978 Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez of Hidalgo, Mexico published his Spanish translation of the *Nican Mopohua*.

1979 Dr. Philip Callahan from the University of Florida took 40 frames of infra-red photographs of the Image.

1979 Shortly after his election to the papacy, Pope John Paul II made the first of his pilgrimages to Mexico. He called the Virgin of Guadalupe the “Star of Evangelization,” knelt before her Image, invoked her motherly assistance, and also hailed her as “Mother of the Americas.”

1979 Dr. Jose Aste-Tonsmann announced the finding of at least four human figures apparently reflected in both eyes of the Virgin. Dr. Tosmann employed image processing-techniques with digitized photographs of both eyes.

1981 Dr. Phillip Callahan published the results of his 1979 infrared study of the Image, *The Tilma Under Infra-red Radiation: An Infrared and Artistic Analysis of the Image of the Virgin Mary in the Basilica of Guadalupe* [Washington: CARA - Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate]

1983 Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez and Dr. Juan Homero Hernández Illescas published their discoveries regarding the stars on the Virgin's mantle in *Las Estrellas del Manto de la Virgen de Guadalupe* (The Stars on the Mantle of the Virgin of Guadalupe) in Mexico.

1988 The liturgical celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12 was raised to the status of a feast in all dioceses in the United States.

1990 May 6: Beautification ceremony of Juan Diego by Pope John Paul II at the Basilica in Mexico City.

1992 In St. Peter's Basilica, Pope John Paul II dedicated a chapel in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

1995 Discovery of the “Codex of 1548,” which was first and officially announced in the magazine, *Maria y sus siervos* (year 1995, issue 26, pp. 37-38), published by the Servites. It was claimed that this Codex was previously kept in a private collection. The discovery is an important one, since it confirms St. Juan Diego's Aztec name and it adds to the scholarly discussion regarding when Antonio Valeriano wrote the *Nican Mohopua*.

1995 In Mexico, Dr. Hernandez Illescas provided complete documentation of his procedures, with many charts, in the expanded version of the 1983

published work with Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez. The updated work was entitled *La Virgen de Guadalupe y las estrellas* (The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Stars).

1999 The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments raised the liturgical celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12 to the rank of a feast in all the countries of the Americas, including all of the dioceses in the United States.

2002 July 31: Juan Diego was canonized in a ceremony presided by His Holiness John Paul II in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. St. Juan's feast day is December 9, the date the Virgin first appeared to him.

INTERNET LINKS ON THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE

The following links on Guadalupe are the few that offer unique information. In my six months of research, I've found very few sites that offer information which is not in some way repeated (if not copied and pasted) from other sites. As of May 1, 2013, the small collection of links below are those I've found in some way different from many other Guadalupe sites. The links are provided as an "FYI" (For Your Information) and do not imply my personal endorsement of said website or blog. Also please know that, like all things on the Internet, some pages are moved or completely disappear. However, these links were checked just before publication and all of them were "alive" and well.

[Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe](http://www.virgendeguadalupe.mx/)

<http://www.virgendeguadalupe.mx/>

[An Infrared Photograph of the Image \(Negative and Positive\)](http://g-infrared.blogspot.com/)

<http://g-infrared.blogspot.com/>

[Immaculate Immigrant 2: Virgin of Guadalupe:](http://immaculateimmigrant.org/immaculate-immigrant-2.php)

The Constellations in the Sky on December 12, 1531

<http://immaculateimmigrant.org/immaculate-immigrant-2.php>

[Our Lady of Guadalupe Completely Beyond Scientific Explanation](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/our_lady_of_guadalupe_complete)

http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/our_lady_of_guadalupe_complete

[The Queen is the Ark, the Sky is Her Cope](http://veritasliberabit.blogspot.com/2006/12/queen-is-ark-sky-is-her-cope.html)

(Catholic and Mexican researcher Luis de Guerrero Osio y Rivas)

<http://veritasliberabit.blogspot.com/2006/12/queen-is-ark-sky-is-her-cope.html>

[Science Sees What Mary Saw From Juan Diego's Tilma](http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0447.html)

(On the Mysterious Eyes of the Image)

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0447.html>

[The Mystery in Our Lady's Eyes](http://www.sancta.org/eyes.html)

<http://www.sancta.org/eyes.html>

About the Author

Marianna is the monthly columnist for “Secrets of the Catholic City,” published by *Catholic Family News*. The founding publisher of *The Catholic Family’s Magnificat!* Magazine, she also became the first home education editor of *Sursum Corda* (which later merged with *Latin Mass* magazine). Her contributors included Fr. John Hardon, S.J. (now Servant of God), Dr. Mary Kay Clark, Laura Berquist, and many others.

After establishing Keeping It Catholic-The Faith, Family and Home Education Network, Marianna became the author of the Keeping It Catholic Home Education Guides, The Return of the King Study Guide, The Age of Mary Study Guides, and the editor of The Keepsake Collection. The driving force behind three Catholic support groups (local, state, and national), Marianna also gained valuable online experience as the Homeschooling Forum Moderator for CRNET (now EWTN Online), where many of her magazine’s articles are archived. For 17 years, she has served as the main moderator of “the KIC List” (the Keeping It Catholic email group) for Catholic families.

Her next book release focuses on Fatima and the supernatural signs witnessed by thousands but which are little known today. Excerpts from her upcoming book, along with other articles, are available at [Keeping It Catholic – The Blog](#)! Readers are always welcome to visit Marianna via [KeepingItCatholic](#) on Facebook or “tweet” her at [KICtheBlog](#).

Notes

[1] “Nican Mopohua: Original Account of Guadalupe”, in which the expressions and words of Our Lady to Juan Diego in the account are paraphrased from the literal translation done by Janet Barber, I.H.M., of the new Spanish version prepared by the renowned Nahuatl scholar, Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez. *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: pp. 194-195. The words of the Virgin are transcribed verbatim from the Nican Mopohua, a record of the Guadalupe apparitions written in Nahuatl, the native language of the Aztecs, by the scholar Antonio Valeriano, an educated noble Indian and a contemporary to St. Juan Diego and Bishop Zumárraga. The title *Nican Mopohua* comes from the work’s first two Aztec words, which mean “here is told, is set down in order.”

[2] Testoni, Manuela. *Our Lady of Guadalupe – History and Meaning of the Apparitions* [Alba House, 2001]: p. 41.

[3] Guerrero, José Luis. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: A New Interpretation of the Story, Apparitions, and Image* [Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2008, Kindle Edition]: Locations 143, 155. In Guerrero’s work, the Virgin’s words are allegedly transcribed *verbatim* from the *Nican Mopohua* originally written by the Indian scholar Antonio Valeriano. However, this author has found three different English translations making the same claim, and none of them match verbatim.

[4] Ibid., Location 174.

[5] “This Inquiry, known as the *Informaciones de 1666*, received oral testimony from seven Indians, one Mestizo and twelve Spaniards and Criollos, as well as written documents from Luis Becerra Tanco, probably the best informed Guadalupan scholar of that century. The integrity of the 21 witnesses is beyond question. The proceedings have not been translated into English. However, English-speaking readers will find excellent accounts of the Inquiry in *The Dark Virgin: The Book of Our Lady of Guadalupe* by Donald Demarest and Coley Taylor, 1953. For those who read Spanish, facsimiles of the original handwritten records of their testimony are given in *La Informaciones Juridicas de 1666 y el Beato Indio Juan Diego*, compiled and printed by Ana Sada Lambreton, H.M.I.G., Mexico, 1991.” See *A Handbook of Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 191 (footnote 4). Also see “Did She Say Guadalupe?”

Holy Mary website [<http://www.holymary.info/didshesayguadalupe.html>]

[6] Leatham, Miguel. University of Mexico, *Indigenista Hermeneutics and the Historical Meaning of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, p. 30.

[7] “The Apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1531,” Michael Journal (Oct-Nov-Dec 2002), [<http://www.michaeljournal.org/guadalupe.htm>]
[Emphasis added]

[8] “Did She Say Guadalupe?” Loc. cit.

[9] “Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Americas and Pro-Life Icon,” Suffering with Joy website [<http://www.sufferingwithjoy.com/articles/>]

[10] Testoni, Manuela. *Our Lady of Guadalupe – History and Meaning of the Apparitions* [Alba House, 2001]: p. 37. The author cites Ex. 19:16-20, Lk. 2:8-14, and Apoc. 21:9-27.

[11] Taylor, Coley. “Our Lady of Guadalupe, Empress of the Americas and Mother of Mercy,” reprinted from a 1953 article in *Divine Love*, Issue No. 87, 4th Quarter, 1981. Reprinted on Mary's Touch website [<http://www.marys-touch.com/history/guadalupe.htm>]

[12] Guerrero, José Luis. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: A New Interpretation of the Story, Apparitions, and Image* [Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2008, Kindle Edition]: Location 306.

[13] Rodriguez, Jeannette. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* [Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994]: p. 16.

[14] “Our Lady of Guadalupe,” Mary Our Mother website [<http://maryourmother.net/Guadalupe.html>] For historical references, the article cites Manuela Testoni, *Our Lady of Guadalupe - History and Meaning of the Apparitions* (Staten Island, NY, 2001); D. Demarest and C. Taylor, *The Dark Virgin - The Book of Our Lady of Guadalupe* (Porter's Landing, Freeport, MN: Coley Taylor Publishers, 1956); Fr. Virgilio Elizondo, *La Morenita - Evangelizer of the Americas* [San Antonio, TX: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1980], Francis Johnston, *The Wonders of Guadalupe* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1981], and Warren H. Carroll, *Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Conquest of Darkness* [Front Royal, VA, 2002].

[15] Lynch, Dan, “The Amazing Truth of Our Lady of Guadalupe,” Catholic

Exchange (December, 2002). Reprinted with permission at the Catholic Education Resource Center website
[<http://catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0592.html>].

[16] Matt. 28:19-20.

[17] King, Christina. "Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Demonic" speech on video, Oct. 12, 2011, "Embracing Your Greatness" on World Family of Radio Maria [<http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/17839044>].

[18] Ibid., Author's Introduction. The author clarifies, "The technical study of this codex has been done primarily by Jody Bryant Smith (1984) and Philip Serna Callahan (1981)."

[19] Rodriguez, Jeannette. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* [Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994]: p. 37.

[20] "Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Americas and Pro-Life Icon," Suffering with Joy website [<http://www.sufferingwithjoy.com/articles/>], citing *Manuela Testoni, Our Lady of Guadalupe – History and Meaning of the Apparitions* [Alba House, 2001]: pp. 43-35.

[21] Rodriguez, Jeannette. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* [Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994]: p. 23.

[22] Elizondo, Fr. Virgilio. *La Morenito - Evangelizer of the Americas* [San Antonio, TX: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1980]: p. 18. Cited by Rodriguez, p. 23.

[23] Cruz, Joan Carroll. *Miraculous Images of Our Lady* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1993]: p. 292.

[24] Callahan, Phillip S. *The Tilma Under Infra-red Radiation: An Infrared and Artistic Analysis of the Image of the Virgin Mary in the Basilica of Guadalupe* [Washington: CARA - Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1981]: pp. 14-15. Cited by Rodriguez, loc. cit., p. 24.

[25] Ps. 88:15.

[26] Gal. 3:26-28.

[27] Eccl. 24: 24.

[28] Hawkins, O.C.S.O., Dom Columban, contributor to *A Handbook of Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate,

2001]: p. 63.

[29] Testoni, Manuela. *Our Lady of Guadalupe - History and Meaning of the Apparitions* [Alba House: Staten Island, NY, 2001]: p. 43.

[30] Apoc. 12:1.

[31] However, when the stars on the Image's turquoise mantle are transposed over the position of the stars in the pre-dawn hours of December 12, 1531, A.D., the *Corona Borealis* is near the Virgin's left-side temple (when facing the Image). It must also be noted that the constellation has seven stars, not twelve as mentioned of the woman's crown of stars in *Apocalypse* 12:1.

[32] Sean O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., Bishop of Fall River, *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. xiv.

[33] In the 1917 Fatima apparitions, witnesses (outside of the actual visionaries) would also see a cloud announcing the Virgin's presence – and this cloud, like the Aztec's understanding of the Virgin of Guadalupe, came from the east.

[34] Testoni, Manuela. *Our Lady of Guadalupe - History and Meaning of the Apparitions* [Alba House: Staten Island, NY, 2001]: p. 44.

[35] Callahan, Phillip S. *The Tilma Under Infra-red Radiation: An Infrared and Artistic Analysis of the Image of the Virgin Mary in the Basilica of Guadalupe* [Washington: CARA - Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1981]: pp. 14-15. The author, who personally examined the Image and tilma, said the rose tunic is "highly reflective of visible radiation, yet transparent to the infrared rays...As in the case of the blue mantle, the shadowing of the pink robe is blended into the paint layer and no drawing or sketch is evident under the pink pigment."

[36] The crescent moon on the Image now appears black but it was ascertained by 1666 that the original crescent was painted over with real silver, which tarnishes to black with age. See *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 58.

[37] Elizondo, Fr. Virgilio. *La Morenito - Evangelizer of the Americas* [San Antonio, TX: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1980]: b1.

[38] Barber, I.H.M., Janet, contributor to *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 72.

- [39] Rodriguez, Jeannette. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* [Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994]: p. 27.
- [40] Testoni, Manuela. *Our Lady of Guadalupe - History and Meaning of the Apparitions* [Alba House: Staten Island, NY, 2001]: p. 44.
- [41] Barber, I.H.M., Janet, contributor to *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 136.
- [42] Ibid.
- [43] Loc. cit., p. 66.
- [44] Guadalupe, Fr. Miguel. *The Seven Veils of Our Lady of Guadalupe* [Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1999]: pp. 198-199.
- [45] Apoc. 12: 14.
- [46] Rodriguez, Jeannette. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* [Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994]: p. 18.
- [47] Testoni, Manuela. *Our Lady of Guadalupe - History and Meaning of the Apparitions* [Alba House: Staten Island, NY, 2001]: pp. 28, 43-44.
- [48] Guadalupe, Fr. Miguel. *The Seven Veils of Our Lady of Guadalupe* [Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1999]: p. 266.
- [49] Septuagint: The ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament), approved by the Catholic Church but rejected by orthodox Jews and Protestant sects.
- [50] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975. Originally published in 1955 by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA from which the 1975 printing was made]: p. 276.
- [51] “A STAR SHALL RISE out of Jacob and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel.” Num. 24:7.
- [52] Callahan, Phillip S. *The Tilma Under Infra-red Radiation: An Infrared and Artistic Analysis of the Image of the Virgin Mary in the Basilica of Guadalupe* [Washington: CARA - Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1981].
- [53] Testoni, Manuela. *Our Lady of Guadalupe - History and Meaning of the*

Apparitions [Alba House: Staten Island, NY, 2001]: p. 31.

[54] Janet Barber, I.H.M. also credits Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez of Hidalgo, Mexico as the first to discover “in Mary’s Image precious and profound meanings which have gone unrecognized by Guadalupan scholars for centuries.” She also wrote that the Image is, in short, “a codex...filled with Christian teachings rooted in the Indians’ own culture.” Barber’s words do not make clear whether Fr. Sanchez or she first employed the word “codex.” As far as my five months’ research can ascertain, the published study of Fr. Sánchez and Dr. Illescas is not published in English. This may explain the unfortunate omissions or obscure references to the research of Fr. Rojas Sanchez and Dr. Illescas in the works of other (and later) authors who explain the Image’s stars and other symbols. See Barber’s essay, “The Sacred Image is a Divine Codex” in *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 68 .

[55] Barber I.H.M., Janet, contributor to *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: pp. 68-69.

[56] According to Janet Barber, I.H.M., Fr. Mario Rojas Sanchez and Dr. Juan Homero Hernández Illescas published a 1983 study but a footnote explains: “Dr. Hernandez gives complete documentation of his procedures, with many charts, in the expanded publication of their findings *La Virgen de Guadalupe y las estrellas*, Mexico, 1995. The optical problem of representing on a plane, stars that are really spread over a sphere (anamorphosis) was taken into account by Dr. Hernandez.” However, Fr. Miguel Guadalupe states, “Their studies have been published under the title *Las Estrellas del Manto de la Virgen de Guadalupe*” (The Stars on the Mantle of the Virgin of Guadalupe). See Barber’s essay, “The Sacred Image is a Divine Codex” in *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, pp. 70-73, and Fr. Miguel Guadalupe, *The Seven Veils of Our Lady of Guadalupe* [Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1999]: p. 267.

[57] Guadalupe, Fr. Miguel. *The Seven Veils of Our Lady of Guadalupe* [Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1999]: p. 268.

[58] Barber I.H.M., Janet, contributor to *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 69.

[59] Barber I.H.M., Janet. "Mary of Guadalupe: Queen of the Cosmos," Los Angeles, CA, May 27, 2001, p. 2, citing and translating the Spanish into English excerpts from Dr. Juan Homero Hernández Illescas, Rev. Monsignor

Mario Rojas, and Enrique R. Salazar S., *La Virgin de Guadalupe y las Estrellas* [Mexico: Centro de Estudios Guadalupanos, 1995], pp. 14, 81-87. Cited by Fr. Xavier Escalada, S.J., *Immaculate Immigrant: Virgin of Guadalupe* (pdf. dated 3.27.11).

[60] Anamorphosis – “making a semi-spherical reality intelligible on a flat plane.” Dr. Juan Hernández Illescas as quoted by Dr. Janet Barber, “Mary of Guadalupe: Queen of the Cosmos.” Los Angeles, CA, May 27, 2001, p. 2.

[61] Barber I.H.M., Janet, contributor to *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 69.

[62] Hawkins, O.C.S.O., Dom. Columban, contributor to *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 66.

[63] Rops, Daniel. *The Protestant Reformation*, pp. 345-346. Cited by Foley, Donal Anthony. *Marian Apparitions, the Bible, and the Modern World* [Herefordshire, England: Gracewing, 2002]: pp. 43, 382.

[64] 2 Thess. 2:3.

[65] Leatham, Miguel. University of Mexico, *Indigenista Hermeneutics and the Historical Meaning of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, p. 30. Nahuatl scholars claim the Virgin Mary’s actual words to Juan Bernardino, the uncle of St. Juan Diego, on December 12, 1531 did **not** include the word *Guadalupe* but instead a Nahuatl phrase that means “the one who crushes the serpent.” Thus her words to Juan Bernardino are rendered: “Call me and my image the Perfect Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, *the one who crushes the serpent.*”

[66] Foley, Donal Anthony. *Marian Apparitions, the Bible, and the Modern World* [Herefordshire, England: Gracewing, 2002]: p. 37. [Emphasis added]

[67] “A STAR SHALL RISE out of Jacob and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel.” Num. 24:7.

[68] Gen. 1:14-16.

[69] Guadalupe, Fr. Miguel. *The Seven Veils of Our Lady of Guadalupe* [Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1999]: p. 266.

[70] Kramer, Rev. Herman Bernard. *The Book of Destiny* [Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, 1975] Originally published in 1955 by Buechler Publishing Co., Belleville, IL. Reprinted in 1972 by Apostolate of Christian Action, Fresno, CA from which the 1975 printing was made): p. 276.

[71] Apoc. 5:5.

[72] Barber I.H.M., Janet, contributor to *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: pp. 69-70. However, it should be noted that the *Corona Borealis* has seven stars, while the woman described in *Apocalypse 12:1* wears a crown of twelve stars.

[73] Guadalupe, Fr. Miguel. *The Seven Veils of Our Lady of Guadalupe* [Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1999]: p. 292.

[74] Job 9:9; 38:31; Amos 5:8.

[75] Job 9:9; Amos 5:8.

[76] Job 26:13.

[77] Thurston, Herbert. "Use of Numbers in the Church," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11 [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911] [<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11151a.htm>]

[78] Lk. 10:1.

[79] 1 Cor. 10:8.

[80] Sungenis, Ph.D., Robert. "New Discoveries of the Constellations on the Tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe," July 26, 2007. Republished July 19, 2011 at The Bellarmine Report

[<http://www.catholicintl.com/index.php/component/content/article/62-mary-and-the-saints/179-new-discoveries-of-the-constellations-on-the-tilma-of-our-lady-of-guadalupe>] which references Matt. 24:29-31; Dan. 8:10.

[81] 2 Thess. 2:7.

[82] Apoc. 9:4-5, 15.

[83] Apoc. 13:1-18.

[84] "Hydra," Oracle Think Quest for Students, [<http://library.thinkquest.org/J0110010/planets,%20moons,%20stars/hydra.htm>]

[85] "Hydra Constellation," Constellation Guide website [<http://www.constellation-guide.com/constellation-list/hydra-constellation/>]

[86] Jn. 10:12. "But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth: and the wolf catcheth, and scattereth the sheep."

[87] Rom. 1:23.

[88] "Canis Minor," Top Astronomer website

[<http://www.topastronomer.com/StarCharts/Constellations/Canis-Minor.php>]

[89] Dan. 7:8.

[90] Regarding dates and the change of seasons (i.e., summer, fall, winter, spring), one must take into account that in 1531, the Winter Solstice took place December 12, the day Our Lady gave her name and the miraculous Image of Guadalupe. On October 4, 1582, Pope Gregory XIII instituted a reformed calendar, because the former Julian calendar allowed an error of one day every 128 years, and it was necessary to determine the exact date of Easter which had to coincide with the spring equinox, as decreed by the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D. The Gregorian calendar, currently in use, advanced the calendar date by 11 days. As a result, the Winter Solstice typically occurs on December 21. (Leap years, which add one day to the calendar, must also be considered. A year is considered a “Leap Year” when 1) the year is evenly divisible by 4 and, 2) the year is evenly divisible by 400. However, if the year can also be evenly divided by 100, it is not a leap year.)

[91] Jn. 10:11.

[92] Guadalupe, Fr. Miguel. *The Seven Veils of Our Lady of Guadalupe* [Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1999]: p. 283.

[93] Loc. cit., p. 275.

[94] Dan. 7:5; Apoc. 13:2.

[95] Isa. 56:8-11. “The Lord God, who gathereth the scattered of Israel, saith: I will still gather unto him his congregation. All ye beasts of the field come to devour, all ye beasts of the forest. His watchmen are all blind, they are all ignorant: dumb dogs not able to bark, seeing vain things, sleeping and loving dreams. And meet impudent dogs. They never had enough: the shepherds themselves knew no understanding: all have turned aside into their own way, every one after his own gain, from the first even to the last.”

[96] Sungenis, op. cit.

[97] “Lynx,” Harvard Observatory,
[<http://chandra.harvard.edu/photo/constellations/lynx.html>]

[98] Jn. 20:29.

[99] Apoc. 11:4.

[100] “Lynx (Constellation)”, Wikipedia
[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynx_\(constellation\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynx_(constellation))] and “31 Lyncis,”

Wikipedia [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alsciaukat>]

[101] Gen. 3:15, Apoc. 12:1-4.

[102] Gen. 15:9, Lev. 4:28, Lev. 5:6, Num. 15:27.

[103] Matt. 25:33.

[104] Apoc. 12:7.

[105] Barber I.H.M., Janet, contributor to *A Handbook on Guadalupe* [New Bedford, MA: Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, 2001]: p. 70.

[106] Apoc. 12:1.

[107] Guadalupe, Fr. Miguel. *The Seven Veils of Our Lady of Guadalupe* [Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1999]: p. 528.

[108] Isa. 13:9-10, Joel 3:15, Matt. 24:29, Mk. 13: 25, Lk. 21: 25, Apoc. 8:12.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

ILLUSTRATED

THOMAS À KEMPIS



TRANSLATED BY
ALOYSIUS CROFT AND HAROLD BOLTON



Catholic way
PUBLISHING

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

THOMAS À KEMPIS

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN INTO MODERN ENGLISH
BY ALOYSIUS CROFT AND HAROLD BOLTON

*“Without labour there
is no rest, and without
fighting, no victory”*

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PREPARATION FOR TOTAL CONSECRATION
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THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

FOREWORD

IN PREPARING this edition of *The Imitation of Christ*, the aim was to achieve a simple, readable text which would ring true to those who are already lovers of this incomparable book and would attract others to it. For this reason we have attempted to render the text into English as it is spoken today rather than the cloudy, archaic terminology that encumbers so many translations of Christian classics. The result, we feel, has achieved a directness and conciseness which will meet the approval of modern readers. In the second place, we have made use of the familiar paragraph form, doing away with the simple statement or verse form of the original and of many translations. This was done in the interest of easier reading, and in order to bring out more clearly the connection between the single statements.

No claim of literary excellence over the many English versions now extant is here advanced, nor any attempt to solve in further confusion the problem of the book's authorship.

Theories most popular at the moment ascribe the *Imitation* to two or three men, members of the Brethren of the Common Life, an association of priests organized in the Netherlands in the latter half of the fourteenth century. That Thomas Hemerken of Kempen, or Thomas 'a Kempis as he is now known, later translated a composite of their writings, essentially a spiritual diary, from the original Netherlandish into Latin is generally admitted by scholars. This Thomas, born about the year 1380, was educated by the Brethren of the Common Life, was moved to join their community, and was ordained priest. His career thereafter was devoted to practicing the counsels of spiritual perfection and to copying books for the schools. See below for a more in-depth Biography. From both pursuits evolved *The Imitation of Christ*. As editor and translator he was not without faults, but thanks to him the *Imitation* became and has remained, after the Bible, the most widely read book in the world. It is his edition that is here rendered into English, without deletion of chapters or parts of them because doubts exist as to their authorship, or because of variants in style, or for any of the other more or less valid reasons.

There is but one major change. The treatise on Holy Communion, which

‘a Kempis places as Book Three, is here titled Book Four. The move makes the order of the whole more logical and agrees with the thought of most editors.

The Translators

Aloysius Croft

Harold Bolton



DAVID AND GOLIATH

BOOK ONE

Thoughts Helpful In The Life Of The Soul



ANGEL OF THE ANNUNCIATION

The First Chapter

Imitating Christ and Despising All Vanities on Earth

HE WHO follows Me, walks not in darkness,” says the Lord (John 8:12). By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ.

The teaching of Christ is more excellent than all the advice of the saints, and he who has His spirit will find in it a hidden manna. Now, there are many who hear the Gospel often but care little for it because they have not the spirit of Christ. Yet whoever wishes to understand fully the words of Christ must try to pattern his whole life on that of Christ.

What good does it do to speak learnedly about the Trinity if, lacking humility, you displease the Trinity? Indeed it is not learning that makes a man holy and just, but a virtuous life makes him pleasing to God. I would rather feel contrition than know how to define it. For what would it profit us to know the whole Bible by heart and the principles of all the philosophers if we live without grace and the love of God? Vanity of vanities and all is vanity, except to love God and serve Him alone.

This is the greatest wisdom—to seek the kingdom of heaven through contempt of the world. It is vanity, therefore, to seek and trust in riches that perish. It is vanity also to court honor and to be puffed up with pride. It is vanity to follow the lusts of the body and to desire things for which severe punishment later must come. It is vanity to wish for long life and to care little about a well-spent life. It is vanity to be concerned with the present only and not to make provision for things to come. It is vanity to love what passes quickly and not to look ahead where eternal joy abides.

Often recall the proverb: “The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing.”¹ Try, moreover, to turn your heart from the love of things visible and bring yourself to things invisible. For they who follow their

own evil passions stain their consciences and lose the grace of God.

The Second Chapter

Having a Humble Opinion of Self

EVERY man naturally desires knowledge² ; but what good is knowledge without fear of God? Indeed a humble rustic who serves God is better than a proud intellectual who neglects his soul to study the course of the stars.³ He who knows himself well becomes mean in his own eyes and is not happy when praised by men.

If I knew all things in the world and had not charity, what would it profit me before God Who will judge me by my deeds?

Shun too great a desire for knowledge, for in it there is much fretting and delusion. Intellectuals like to appear learned and to be called wise. Yet there are many things the knowledge of which does little or no good to the soul, and he who concerns himself about other things than those which lead to salvation is very unwise.

Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life eases the mind and a clean conscience inspires great trust in God.

The more you know and the better you understand, the more severely will you be judged, unless your life is also the more holy. Do not be proud, therefore, because of your learning or skill. Rather, fear because of the talent given you. If you think you know many things and understand them well enough, realize at the same time that there is much you do not know. Hence, do not affect wisdom, but admit your ignorance. Why prefer yourself to anyone else when many are more learned, more cultured than you?

If you wish to learn and appreciate something worth while, then love to be unknown and considered as nothing. Truly to know and despise self is the best and most perfect counsel. To think of oneself as nothing, and always to think well and highly of others is the best and most perfect wisdom. Wherefore, if you see another sin openly or commit a serious crime, do not consider yourself better, for you do not know how long you can remain in

good estate. All men are frail, but you must admit that none is more frail than yourself.

The Third Chapter

The Doctrine of Truth

HAPPY is he to whom truth manifests itself, not in signs and words that fade, but as it actually is. Our opinions, our senses often deceive us and we discern very little.

What good is much discussion of involved and obscure matters when our ignorance of them will not be held against us on Judgment Day? Neglect of things which are profitable and necessary and undue concern with those which are irrelevant and harmful, are great folly.

We have eyes and do not see.

What, therefore, have we to do with questions of philosophy? He to whom the Eternal Word speaks is free from theorizing. For from this Word are all things and of Him all things speak—the Beginning Who also speaks to us. Without this Word no man understands or judges aright. He to whom it becomes everything, who traces all things to it and who sees all things in it, may ease his heart and remain at peace with God.

O God, You Who are the truth, make me one with You in love everlasting. I am often wearied by the many things I hear and read, but in You is all that I long for. Let the learned be still, let all creatures be silent before You; You alone speak to me.

The more recollected a man is, and the more simple of heart he becomes, the easier he understands sublime things, for he receives the light of knowledge from above. The pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not distracted by many labors, for he does them all for the honor of God. And since he enjoys interior peace he seeks no selfish end in anything. What, indeed, gives more trouble and affliction than uncontrolled desires of the heart?

A good and devout man arranges in his mind the things he has to do, not according to the whims of evil inclination but according to the dictates of right reason. Who is forced to struggle more than he who tries to master

himself? This ought to be our purpose, then: to conquer self, to become stronger each day, to advance in virtue.

Every perfection in this life has some imperfection mixed with it and no learning of ours is without some darkness. Humble knowledge of self is a surer path to God than the ardent pursuit of learning. Not that learning is to be considered evil, or knowledge, which is good in itself and so ordained by God; but a clean conscience and virtuous life ought always to be preferred. Many often err and accomplish little or nothing because they try to become learned rather than to live well.

If men used as much care in uprooting vices and implanting virtues as they do in discussing problems, there would not be so much evil and scandal in the world, or such laxity in religious organizations. On the day of judgment, surely, we shall not be asked what we have read but what we have done; not how well we have spoken but how well we have lived.

Tell me, where now are all the masters and teachers whom you knew so well in life and who were famous for their learning? Others have already taken their places and I know not whether they ever think of their predecessors. During life they seemed to be something; now they are seldom remembered. How quickly the glory of the world passes away! If only their lives had kept pace with their learning, then their study and reading would have been worth while.

How many there are who perish because of vain worldly knowledge and too little care for serving God. They became vain in their own conceits because they chose to be great rather than humble.

He is truly great who has great charity. He is truly great who is little in his own eyes and makes nothing of the highest honor. He is truly wise who looks upon all earthly things as folly that he may gain Christ. He who does God's will and renounces his own is truly very learned.

The Fourth Chapter

Prudence in Action

DO NOT yield to every impulse and suggestion but consider things carefully and patiently in the light of God's will. For very often, sad to say, we are so weak that we believe and speak evil of others rather than good. Perfect men, however, do not readily believe every talebearer, because they know that human frailty is prone to evil and is likely to appear in speech.

Not to act rashly or to cling obstinately to one's opinion, not to believe everything people say or to spread abroad the gossip one has heard, is great wisdom.

Take counsel with a wise and conscientious man. Seek the advice of your betters in preference to following your own inclinations.

A good life makes a man wise according to God and gives him experience in many things, for the more humble he is and the more subject to God, the wiser and the more at peace he will be in all things.

The Fifth Chapter
Reading the Holy Scripture

TRUTH, not eloquence, is to be sought in reading the Holy Scriptures; and every part must be read in the spirit in which it was written. For in the Scriptures we ought to seek profit rather than polished diction.

Likewise we ought to read simple and devout books as willingly as learned and profound ones. We ought not to be swayed by the authority of the writer, whether he be a great literary light or an insignificant person, but by the love of simple truth. We ought not to ask who is speaking, but mark what is said. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord remains forever. God speaks to us in many ways without regard for persons.

Our curiosity often impedes our reading of the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and mull over what we ought simply to read and pass by.

If you would profit from it, therefore, read with humility, simplicity, and faith, and never seek a reputation for being learned. Seek willingly and listen attentively to the words of the saints; do not be displeased with the sayings of the ancients, for they were not made without purpose.

The Sixth Chapter
Unbridled Affections

WHEN a man desires a thing too much, he at once becomes ill at ease. A proud and avaricious man never rests, whereas he who is poor and humble of heart lives in a world of peace. An unmortified man is quickly tempted and overcome in small, trifling evils; his spirit is weak, in a measure carnal and inclined to sensual things; he can hardly abstain from earthly desires. Hence it makes him sad to forego them; he is quick to anger if reproved. Yet if he satisfies his desires, remorse of conscience overwhelms him because he followed his passions and they did not lead to the peace he sought.

True peace of heart, then, is found in resisting passions, not in satisfying them. There is no peace in the carnal man, in the man given to vain attractions, but there is peace in the fervent and spiritual man.

The Seventh Chapter

Avoiding False Hope and Pride

VAIN is the man who puts his trust in men, in created things.

Do not be ashamed to serve others for the love of Jesus Christ and to seem poor in this world. Do not be self-sufficient but place your trust in God. Do what lies in your power and God will aid your good will. Put no trust in your own learning nor in the cunning of any man, but rather in the grace of God Who helps the humble and humbles the proud.

If you have wealth, do not glory in it, nor in friends because they are powerful, but in God Who gives all things and Who desires above all to give Himself. Do not boast of personal stature or of physical beauty, qualities which are marred and destroyed by a little sickness. Do not take pride in your talent or ability, lest you displease God to Whom belongs all the natural gifts that you have.

Do not think yourself better than others lest, perhaps, you be accounted worse before God Who knows what is in man. Do not take pride in your good deeds, for God's judgments differ from those of men and what pleases them often displeases Him. If there is good in you, see more good in others, so that you may remain humble. It does no harm to esteem yourself less than anyone else, but it is very harmful to think yourself better than even one. The humble live in continuous peace, while in the hearts of the proud are envy and frequent anger.

The Eighth Chapter

Shunning Over-Familiarity

DO NOT open your heart to every man, but discuss your affairs with one who is wise and who fears God. Do not keep company with young people and strangers. Do not fawn upon the rich, and do not be fond of mingling with the great. Associate with the humble and the simple, with the devout and virtuous, and with them speak of edifying things. Be not intimate with any woman, but generally commend all good women to God. Seek only the intimacy of God and of His angels, and avoid the notice of men.

We ought to have charity for all men but familiarity with all is not expedient. Sometimes it happens that a person enjoys a good reputation among those who do not know him, but at the same time is held in slight regard by those who do. Frequently we think we are pleasing others by our presence and we begin rather to displease them by the faults they find in us.

The Ninth Chapter

Obedience and Subjection

IT IS a very great thing to obey, to live under a superior and not to be one's own master, for it is much safer to be subject than it is to command. Many live in obedience more from necessity than from love. Such become discontented and dejected on the slightest pretext; they will never gain peace of mind unless they subject themselves wholeheartedly for the love of God.

Go where you may, you will find no rest except in humble obedience to the rule of authority. Dreams of happiness expected from change and different places have deceived many.

Everyone, it is true, wishes to do as he pleases and is attracted to those who agree with him. But if God be among us, we must at times give up our opinions for the blessings of peace.

Furthermore, who is so wise that he can have full knowledge of everything? Do not trust too much in your own opinions, but be willing to listen to those of others. If, though your own be good, you accept another's opinion for love of God, you will gain much more merit; for I have often heard that it is safer to listen to advice and take it than to give it. It may happen, too, that while one's own opinion may be good, refusal to agree with others when reason and occasion demand it, is a sign of pride and obstinacy.

The Tenth Chapter

Avoiding Idle Talk

SHUN the gossip of men as much as possible, for discussion of worldly affairs, even though sincere, is a great distraction inasmuch as we are quickly ensnared and captivated by vanity.

Many a time I wish that I had held my peace and had not associated with men. Why, indeed, do we converse and gossip among ourselves when we so seldom part without a troubled conscience? We do so because we seek comfort from one another's conversation and wish to ease the mind wearied by diverse thoughts. Hence, we talk and think quite fondly of things we like very much or of things we dislike intensely. But, sad to say, we often talk vainly and to no purpose; for this external pleasure effectively bars inward and divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray lest time pass idly.

When the right and opportune moment comes for speaking, say something that will edify.

Bad habits and indifference to spiritual progress do much to remove the guard from the tongue. Devout conversation on spiritual matters, on the contrary, is a great aid to spiritual progress, especially when persons of the same mind and spirit associate together in God.

The Eleventh Chapter

Acquiring Peace and Zeal for Perfection

WE SHOULD enjoy much peace if we did not concern ourselves with what others say and do, for these are no concern of ours. How can a man who meddles in affairs not his own, who seeks strange distractions, and who is little or seldom inwardly recollected, live long in peace?

Blessed are the simple of heart for they shall enjoy peace in abundance.

Why were some of the saints so perfect and so given to contemplation? Because they tried to mortify entirely in themselves all earthly desires, and thus they were able to attach themselves to God with all their heart and freely to concentrate their innermost thoughts.

We are too occupied with our own whims and fancies, too taken up with passing things. Rarely do we completely conquer even one vice, and we are not inflamed with the desire to improve ourselves day by day; hence, we remain cold and indifferent. If we mortified our bodies perfectly and allowed no distractions to enter our minds, we could appreciate divine things and experience something of heavenly contemplation.

The greatest obstacle, indeed, the only obstacle, is that we are not free from passions and lusts, that we do not try to follow the perfect way of the saints. Thus when we encounter some slight difficulty, we are too easily dejected and turn to human consolations. If we tried, however, to stand as brave men in battle, the help of the Lord from heaven would surely sustain us. For He Who gives us the opportunity of fighting for victory, is ready to help those who carry on and trust in His grace.

If we let our progress in religious life depend on the observance of its externals alone, our devotion will quickly come to an end. Let us, then, lay the ax to the root that we may be freed from our passions and thus have peace of mind.

If we were to uproot only one vice each year, we should soon become

perfect. The contrary, however, is often the case—we feel that we were better and purer in the first fervor of our conversion than we are after many years in the practice of our faith. Our fervor and progress ought to increase day by day; yet it is now considered noteworthy if a man can retain even a part of his first fervor.

If we did a little violence to ourselves at the start, we should afterwards be able to do all things with ease and joy. It is hard to break old habits, but harder still to go against our will.

If you do not overcome small, trifling things, how will you overcome the more difficult? Resist temptations in the beginning, and unlearn the evil habit lest perhaps, little by little, it lead to a more evil one.

If you but consider what peace a good life will bring to yourself and what joy it will give to others, I think you will be more concerned about your spiritual progress.

The Twelfth Chapter

The Value of Adversity

IT IS good for us to have trials and troubles at times, for they often remind us that we are on probation and ought not to hope in any worldly thing. It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradiction, to be misjudged by men even though we do well and mean well. These things help us to be humble and shield us from vainglory. When to all outward appearances men give us no credit, when they do not think well of us, then we are more inclined to seek God Who sees our hearts. Therefore, a man ought to root himself so firmly in God that he will not need the consolations of men.

When a man of good will is afflicted, tempted, and tormented by evil thoughts, he realizes clearly that his greatest need is God, without Whom he can do no good. Saddened by his miseries and sufferings, he laments and prays. He wearies of living longer and wishes for death that he might be dissolved and be with Christ. Then he understands fully that perfect security and complete peace cannot be found on earth.

The Thirteenth Chapter

Resisting Temptation

SO LONG as we live in this world we cannot escape suffering and temptation. Whence it is written in Job: “The life of man upon earth is a warfare.”⁴ Everyone, therefore, must guard against temptation and must watch in prayer lest the devil, who never sleeps but goes about seeking whom he may devour, find occasion to deceive him. No one is so perfect or so holy but he is sometimes tempted; man cannot be altogether free from temptation.

Yet temptations, though troublesome and severe, are often useful to a man, for in them he is humbled, purified, and instructed. The saints all passed through many temptations and trials to profit by them, while those who could not resist became reprobate and fell away. There is no state so holy, no place so secret that temptations and trials will not come. Man is never safe from them as long as he lives, for they come from within us—in sin we were born. When one temptation or trial passes, another comes; we shall always have something to suffer because we have lost the state of original blessedness.

Many people try to escape temptations, only to fall more deeply. We cannot conquer simply by fleeing, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies. The man who only shuns temptations outwardly and does not uproot them will make little progress; indeed they will quickly return, more violent than before.

Little by little, in patience and long-suffering you will overcome them, by the help of God rather than by severity and your own rash ways. Often take counsel when tempted; and do not be harsh with others who are tempted, but console them as you yourself would wish to be consoled.

The beginning of all temptation lies in a wavering mind and little trust in God, for as a rudderless ship is driven hither and yon by waves, so a careless and irresolute man is tempted in many ways. Fire tempers iron and temptation steels the just. Often we do not know what we can stand, but

temptation shows us what we are.

Above all, we must be especially alert against the beginnings of temptation, for the enemy is more easily conquered if he is refused admittance to the mind and is met beyond the threshold when he knocks.

Someone has said very aptly: "Resist the beginnings; remedies come too late, when by long delay the evil has gained strength." First, a mere thought comes to mind, then strong imagination, followed by pleasure, evil delight, and consent. Thus, because he is not resisted in the beginning, Satan gains full entry. And the longer a man delays in resisting, so much the weaker does he become each day, while the strength of the enemy grows against him.

Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion, others toward the end, while some are troubled almost constantly throughout their life. Others, again, are tempted but lightly according to the wisdom and justice of Divine Providence Who weighs the status and merit of each and prepares all for the salvation of His elect.

We should not despair, therefore, when we are tempted, but pray to God the more fervently that He may see fit to help us, for according to the word of Paul, He will make issue with temptation that we may be able to bear it. Let us humble our souls under the hand of God in every trial and temptation for He will save and exalt the humble in spirit.

In temptations and trials the progress of a man is measured; in them opportunity for merit and virtue is made more manifest.

When a man is not troubled it is not hard for him to be fervent and devout, but if he bears up patiently in time of adversity, there is hope for great progress.

Some, guarded against great temptations, are frequently overcome by small ones in order that, humbled by their weakness in small trials, they may not presume on their own strength in great ones.

The Fourteenth Chapter

Avoiding Rash Judgment

TURN your attention upon yourself and beware of judging the deeds of other men, for in judging others a man labors vainly, often makes mistakes, and easily sins; whereas, in judging and taking stock of himself he does something that is always profitable.

We frequently judge that things are as we wish them to be, for through personal feeling true perspective is easily lost.

If God were the sole object of our desire, we should not be disturbed so easily by opposition to our opinions. But often something lurks within or happens from without to draw us along with it.

Many, unawares, seek themselves in the things they do. They seem even to enjoy peace of mind when things happen according to their wish and liking, but if otherwise than they desire, they are soon disturbed and saddened. Differences of feeling and opinion often divide friends and acquaintances, even those who are religious and devout.

An old habit is hard to break, and no one is willing to be led farther than he can see.

If you rely more upon your intelligence or industry than upon the virtue of submission to Jesus Christ, you will hardly, and in any case slowly, become an enlightened man. God wants us to be completely subject to Him and, through ardent love, to rise above all human wisdom.

The Fifteenth Chapter

Works Done in Charity

NEVER do evil for anything in the world, or for the love of any man. For one who is in need, however, a good work may at times be purposely left undone or changed for a better one. This is not the omission of a good deed but rather its improvement.

Without charity external work is of no value, but anything done in charity, be it ever so small and trivial, is entirely fruitful inasmuch as God weighs the love with which a man acts rather than the deed itself.

He does much who loves much. He does much who does a thing well. He does well who serves the common good rather than his own interests.

Now, that which seems to be charity is oftentimes really sensuality, for man's own inclination, his own will, his hope of reward, and his self-interest, are motives seldom absent. On the contrary, he who has true and perfect charity seeks self in nothing, but searches all things for the glory of God. Moreover, he envies no man, because he desires no personal pleasure nor does he wish to rejoice in himself; rather he desires the greater glory of God above all things. He ascribes to man nothing that is good but attributes it wholly to God from Whom all things proceed as from a fountain, and in Whom all the blessed shall rest as their last end and fruition.

If man had but a spark of true charity he would surely sense that all the things of earth are full of vanity!

The Sixteenth Chapter

Bearing with the Faults of Others

UNTIL God ordains otherwise, a man ought to bear patiently whatever he cannot correct in himself and in others. Consider it better thus—perhaps to try your patience and to test you, for without such patience and trial your merits are of little account. Nevertheless, under such difficulties you should pray that God will consent to help you bear them calmly.

If, after being admonished once or twice, a person does not amend, do not argue with him but commit the whole matter to God that His will and honor may be furthered in all His servants, for God knows well how to turn evil to good. Try to bear patiently with the defects and infirmities of others, whatever they may be, because you also have many a fault which others must endure.

If you cannot make yourself what you would wish to be, how can you bend others to your will? We want them to be perfect, yet we do not correct our own faults. We wish them to be severely corrected, yet we will not correct ourselves. Their great liberty displeases us, yet we would not be denied what we ask. We would have them bound by laws, yet we will allow ourselves to be restrained in nothing. Hence, it is clear how seldom we think of others as we do of ourselves.

If all were perfect, what should we have to suffer from others for God's sake? But God has so ordained, that we may learn to bear with one another's burdens, for there is no man without fault, no man without burden, no man sufficient to himself nor wise enough. Hence we must support one another, console one another, mutually help, counsel, and advise, for the measure of every man's virtue is best revealed in time of adversity—adversity that does not weaken a man but rather shows what he is.

The Seventeenth Chapter

Monastic Life

IF YOU wish peace and concord with others, you must learn to break your will in many things. To live in monasteries or religious communities, to remain there without complaint, and to persevere faithfully till death is no small matter. Blessed indeed is he who there lives a good life and there ends his days in happiness.

If you would persevere in seeking perfection, you must consider yourself a pilgrim, an exile on earth. If you would become a religious, you must be content to seem a fool for the sake of Christ. Habit and tonsure change a man but little; it is the change of life, the complete mortification of passions that endow a true religious.

He who seeks anything but God alone and the salvation of his soul will find only trouble and grief, and he who does not try to become the least, the servant of all, cannot remain at peace for long.

You have come to serve, not to rule. You must understand, too, that you have been called to suffer and to work, not to idle and gossip away your time. Here men are tried as gold in a furnace. Here no man can remain unless he desires with all his heart to humble himself before God.

The Eighteenth Chapter

The Example Set Us by the Holy Fathers

CONSIDER the lively examples set us by the saints, who possessed the light of true perfection and religion, and you will see how little, how nearly nothing, we do. What, alas, is our life, compared with theirs? The saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in work and fatigue, in vigils and fasts, in prayers and holy meditations, in persecutions and many afflictions. How many and severe were the trials they suffered—the Apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the rest who willed to follow in the footsteps of Christ! They hated their lives on earth that they might have life in eternity.

How strict and detached were the lives the holy hermits led in the desert! What long and grave temptations they suffered! How often were they beset by the enemy! What frequent and ardent prayers they offered to God! What rigorous fasts they observed! How great their zeal and their love for spiritual perfection! How brave the fight they waged to master their evil habits! What pure and straightforward purpose they showed toward God! By day they labored and by night they spent themselves in long prayers. Even at work they did not cease from mental prayer. They used all their time profitably; every hour seemed too short for serving God, and in the great sweetness of contemplation, they forgot even their bodily needs.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honors, friends, and associates. They desired nothing of the world. They scarcely allowed themselves the necessities of life, and the service of the body, even when necessary, was irksome to them. They were poor in earthly things but rich in grace and virtue. Outwardly destitute, inwardly they were full of grace and divine consolation. Strangers to the world, they were close and intimate friends of God. To themselves they seemed as nothing, and they were despised by the world, but in the eyes of God they were precious and beloved. They lived in

true humility and simple obedience; they walked in charity and patience, making progress daily on the pathway of spiritual life and obtaining great favor with God.

They were given as an example for all religious, and their power to stimulate us to perfection ought to be greater than that of the lukewarm to tempt us to laxity.

How great was the fervor of all religious in the beginning of their holy institution! How great their devotion in prayer and their rivalry for virtue! What splendid discipline flourished among them! What great reverence and obedience in all things under the rule of a superior! The footsteps they left behind still bear witness that they indeed were holy and perfect men who fought bravely and conquered the world.

Today, he who is not a transgressor and who can bear patiently the duties which he has taken upon himself is considered great. How lukewarm and negligent we are! We lose our original fervor very quickly and we even become weary of life from laziness! Do not you, who have seen so many examples of the devout, fall asleep in the pursuit of virtue!

The Nineteenth Chapter

The Practices of a Good Religious

THE life of a good religious ought to abound in every virtue so that he is interiorly what to others he appears to be. With good reason there ought to be much more within than appears on the outside, for He who sees within is God, Whom we ought to reverence most highly wherever we are and in Whose sight we ought to walk pure as the angels.

Each day we ought to renew our resolutions and arouse ourselves to fervor as though it were the first day of our religious life. We ought to say: “Help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution and in Your holy service. Grant me now, this very day, to begin perfectly, for thus far I have done nothing.”

As our intention is, so will be our progress; and he who desires perfection must be very diligent. If the strong-willed man fails frequently, what of the man who makes up his mind seldom or half-heartedly? Many are the ways of failing in our resolutions; even a slight omission of religious practice entails a loss of some kind.

Just men depend on the grace of God rather than on their own wisdom in keeping their resolutions. In Him they confide every undertaking, for man, indeed, proposes but God disposes, and God’s way is not man’s. If a habitual exercise is sometimes omitted out of piety or in the interests of another, it can easily be resumed later. But if it be abandoned carelessly, through weariness or neglect, then the fault is great and will prove hurtful. Much as we try, we still fail too easily in many things. Yet we must always have some fixed purpose, especially against things which beset us the most. Our outward and inward lives alike must be closely watched and well ordered, for both are important to perfection.

If you cannot recollect yourself continuously, do so once a day at least, in the morning or in the evening. In the morning make a resolution and in the evening examine yourself on what you have said this day, what you have

done and thought, for in these things perhaps you have often offended God and those about you.

Arm yourself like a man against the devil's assaults. Curb your appetite and you will more easily curb every inclination of the flesh. Never be completely unoccupied, but read or write or pray or meditate or do something for the common good. Bodily discipline, however, must be undertaken with discretion and is not to be practiced indiscriminately by everyone.

Devotions not common to all are not to be displayed in public, for such personal things are better performed in private. Furthermore, beware of indifference to community prayer through love of your own devotions. If, however, after doing completely and faithfully all you are bound and commanded to do, you then have leisure, use it as personal piety suggests.

Not everyone can have the same devotion. One exactly suits this person, another that. Different exercises, likewise, are suitable for different times, some for feast days and some again for weekdays. In time of temptation we need certain devotions. For days of rest and peace we need others. Some are suitable when we are sad, others when we are joyful in the Lord.

About the time of the principal feasts good devotions ought to be renewed and the intercession of the saints more fervently implored. From one feast day to the next we ought to fix our purpose as though we were then to pass from this world and come to the eternal holyday.

During holy seasons, finally, we ought to prepare ourselves carefully, to live holier lives, and to observe each rule more strictly, as though we were soon to receive from God the reward of our labors. If this end be deferred, let us believe that we are not well prepared and that we are not yet worthy of the great glory that shall in due time be revealed to us. Let us try, meanwhile, to prepare ourselves better for death.

"Blessed is the servant," says Christ, "whom his master, when he cometh, shall find watching. Amen I say to you: he shall make him ruler over all his goods."⁵

The Twentieth Chapter

The Love of Solitude and Silence

SEEK a suitable time for leisure and meditate often on the favors of God. Leave curiosities alone. Read such matters as bring sorrow to the heart rather than occupation to the mind. If you withdraw yourself from unnecessary talking and idle running about, from listening to gossip and rumors, you will find enough time that is suitable for holy meditation.

Very many great saints avoided the company of men wherever possible and chose to serve God in retirement. "As often as I have been among men," said one writer, "I have returned less a man." We often find this to be true when we take part in long conversations. It is easier to be silent altogether than not to speak too much. To stay at home is easier than to be sufficiently on guard while away. Anyone, then, who aims to live the inner and spiritual life must go apart, with Jesus, from the crowd.

No man appears in safety before the public eye unless he first relishes obscurity. No man is safe in speaking unless he loves to be silent. No man rules safely unless he is willing to be ruled. No man commands safely unless he has learned well how to obey. No man rejoices safely unless he has within him the testimony of a good conscience.

More than this, the security of the saints was always enveloped in the fear of God, nor were they less cautious and humble because they were conspicuous for great virtues and graces. The security of the wicked, on the contrary, springs from pride and presumption, and will end in their own deception.

Never promise yourself security in this life, even though you seem to be a good religious, or a devout hermit. It happens very often that those whom men esteem highly are more seriously endangered by their own excessive confidence. Hence, for many it is better not to be too free from temptations, but often to be tried lest they become too secure, too filled with pride, or even

too eager to fall back upon external comforts.

If only a man would never seek passing joys or entangle himself with worldly affairs, what a good conscience he would have. What great peace and tranquillity would be his, if he cut himself off from all empty care and thought only of things divine, things helpful to his soul, and put all his trust in God.

No man deserves the consolation of heaven unless he persistently arouses himself to holy contrition. If you desire true sorrow of heart, seek the privacy of your cell and shut out the uproar of the world, as it is written: "In your chamber bewail your sins." There you will find what too often you lose abroad.

Your cell will become dear to you if you remain in it, but if you do not, it will become wearisome. If in the beginning of your religious life, you live within your cell and keep to it, it will soon become a special friend and a very great comfort.

In silence and quiet the devout soul advances in virtue and learns the hidden truths of Scripture. There she finds a flood of tears with which to bathe and cleanse herself nightly, that she may become the more intimate with her Creator the farther she withdraws from all the tumult of the world. For God and His holy angels will draw near to him who withdraws from friends and acquaintances.

It is better for a man to be obscure and to attend to his salvation than to neglect it and work miracles. It is praiseworthy for a religious seldom to go abroad, to flee the sight of men and have no wish to see them.

Why wish to see what you are not permitted to have? "The world passes away and the concupiscence thereof." Sensual craving sometimes entices you to wander around, but when the moment is past, what do you bring back with you save a disturbed conscience and heavy heart? A happy going often leads to a sad return, a merry evening to a mournful dawn. Thus, all carnal joy begins sweetly but in the end brings remorse and death.

What can you find elsewhere that you cannot find here in your cell? Behold heaven and earth and all the elements, for of these all things are made. What can you see anywhere under the sun that will remain long? Perhaps you think you will completely satisfy yourself, but you cannot do so, for if you should see all existing things, what would they be but an empty vision?

Raise your eyes to God in heaven and pray because of your sins and

shortcomings. Leave vanity to the vain. Set yourself to the things which God has commanded you to do. Close the door upon yourself and call to you Jesus, your Beloved. Remain with Him in your cell, for nowhere else will you find such peace. If you had not left it, and had not listened to idle gossip, you would have remained in greater peace. But since you love, sometimes, to hear news, it is only right that you should suffer sorrow of heart from it.

The Twenty-First Chapter

Sorrow of Heart

IF YOU wish to make progress in virtue, live in the fear of the Lord, do not look for too much freedom, discipline your senses, and shun inane silliness. Sorrow opens the door to many a blessing which dissoluteness usually destroys.

It is a wonder that any man who considers and meditates on his exiled state and the many dangers to his soul, can ever be perfectly happy in this life. Lighthearted and heedless of our defects, we do not feel the real sorrows of our souls, but often indulge in empty laughter when we have good reason to weep. No liberty is true and no joy is genuine unless it is founded in the fear of the Lord and a good conscience.

Happy is the man who can throw off the weight of every care and recollect himself in holy contrition. Happy is the man who casts from him all that can stain or burden his conscience.

Fight like a man. Habit is overcome by habit. If you leave men alone, they will leave you alone to do what you have to do. Do not busy yourself about the affairs of others and do not become entangled in the business of your superiors. Keep an eye primarily on yourself and admonish yourself instead of your friends.

If you do not enjoy the favor of men, do not let it sadden you; but consider it a serious matter if you do not conduct yourself as well or as carefully as is becoming for a servant of God and a devout religious.

It is often better and safer for us to have few consolations in this life, especially comforts of the body. Yet if we do not have divine consolation or experience it rarely, it is our own fault because we seek no sorrow of heart and do not forsake vain outward satisfaction.

Consider yourself unworthy of divine solace and deserving rather of much tribulation. When a man is perfectly contrite, the whole world is bitter and

wearisome to him.

A good man always finds enough over which to mourn and weep; whether he thinks of himself or of his neighbor he knows that no one lives here without suffering, and the closer he examines himself the more he grieves.

The sins and vices in which we are so entangled that we can rarely apply ourselves to the contemplation of heaven are matters for just sorrow and inner remorse.

I do not doubt that you would correct yourself more earnestly if you would think more of an early death than of a long life. And if you pondered in your heart the future pains of hell or of purgatory, I believe you would willingly endure labor and trouble and would fear no hardship. But since these thoughts never pierce the heart and since we are enamored of flattering pleasure, we remain very cold and indifferent. Our wretched body complains so easily because our soul is altogether too lifeless.

Pray humbly to the Lord, therefore, that He may give you the spirit of contrition and say with the Prophet: “Feed me, Lord, with the bread of mourning and give me to drink of tears in full measure.”⁶

The Twenty-Second Chapter

Thoughts on the Misery of Man

WHEREVER you are, wherever you go, you are miserable unless you turn to God. So why be dismayed when things do not happen as you wish and desire? Is there anyone who has everything as he wishes? No—neither I, nor you, nor any man on earth. There is no one in the world, be he Pope or king, who does not suffer trial and anguish.

Who is the better off then? Surely, it is the man who will suffer something for God. Many unstable and weak-minded people say: “See how well that man lives, how rich, how great he is, how powerful and mighty.” But you must lift up your eyes to the riches of heaven and realize that the material goods of which they speak are nothing. These things are uncertain and very burdensome because they are never possessed without anxiety and fear. Man’s happiness does not consist in the possession of abundant goods; a very little is enough.

Living on earth is truly a misery. The more a man desires spiritual life, the more bitter the present becomes to him, because he understands better and sees more clearly the defects, the corruption of human nature. To eat and drink, to watch and sleep, to rest, to labor, and to be bound by other human necessities is certainly a great misery and affliction to the devout man, who would gladly be released from them and be free from all sin. Truly, the inner man is greatly burdened in this world by the necessities of the body, and for this reason the Prophet prayed that he might be as free from them as possible, when he said: “From my necessities, O Lord, deliver me.”²

But woe to those who know not their own misery, and greater woe to those who love this miserable and corruptible life. Some, indeed, can scarcely procure its necessities either by work or by begging; yet they love it so much that, if they could live here always, they would care nothing for the kingdom of God.

How foolish and faithless of heart are those who are so engrossed in earthly things as to relish nothing but what is carnal! Miserable men indeed, for in the end they will see to their sorrow how cheap and worthless was the thing they loved.

The saints of God and all devout friends of Christ did not look to what pleases the body nor to the things that are popular from time to time. Their whole hope and aim centered on the everlasting good. Their whole desire pointed upward to the lasting and invisible realm, lest the love of what is visible drag them down to lower things.

Do not lose heart, then, my brother, in pursuing your spiritual life. There is yet time, and your hour is not past. Why delay your purpose? Arise! Begin at once and say: "Now is the time to act, now is the time to fight, now is the proper time to amend."

When you are troubled and afflicted, that is the time to gain merit. You must pass through water and fire before coming to rest. Unless you do violence to yourself you will not overcome vice.

So long as we live in this fragile body, we can neither be free from sin nor live without weariness and sorrow. Gladly would we rest from all misery, but in losing innocence through sin we also lost true blessedness. Therefore, we must have patience and await the mercy of God until this iniquity passes, until mortality is swallowed up in life.

How great is the frailty of human nature which is ever prone to evil! Today you confess your sins and tomorrow you again commit the sins which you confessed. One moment you resolve to be careful, and yet after an hour you act as though you had made no resolution.

We have cause, therefore, because of our frailty and feebleness, to humble ourselves and never think anything great of ourselves. Through neglect we may quickly lose that which by God's grace we have acquired only through long, hard labor. What, eventually, will become of us who so quickly grow lukewarm? Woe to us if we presume to rest in peace and security when actually there is no true holiness in our lives. It would be beneficial for us, like good novices, to be instructed once more in the principles of a good life, to see if there be hope of amendment and greater spiritual progress in the future.

The Twenty-Third Chapter

Thoughts on Death

VERY soon your life here will end; consider, then, what may be in store for you elsewhere. Today we live; tomorrow we die and are quickly forgotten. Oh, the dullness and hardness of a heart which looks only to the present instead of preparing for that which is to come!

Therefore, in every deed and every thought, act as though you were to die this very day. If you had a good conscience you would not fear death very much. It is better to avoid sin than to fear death. If you are not prepared today, how will you be prepared tomorrow? Tomorrow is an uncertain day; how do you know you will have a tomorrow?

What good is it to live a long life when we amend that life so little? Indeed, a long life does not always benefit us, but on the contrary, frequently adds to our guilt. Would that in this world we had lived well throughout one single day. Many count up the years they have spent in religion but find their lives made little holier. If it is so terrifying to die, it is nevertheless possible that to live longer is more dangerous. Blessed is he who keeps the moment of death ever before his eyes and prepares for it every day.

If you have ever seen a man die, remember that you, too, must go the same way. In the morning consider that you may not live till evening, and when evening comes do not dare to promise yourself the dawn. Be always ready, therefore, and so live that death will never take you unprepared. Many die suddenly and unexpectedly, for in the unexpected hour the Son of God will come. When that last moment arrives you will begin to have a quite different opinion of the life that is now entirely past and you will regret very much that you were so careless and remiss.

How happy and prudent is he who tries now in life to be what he wants to be found in death. Perfect contempt of the world, a lively desire to advance in virtue, a love for discipline, the works of penance, readiness to obey, self-

denial, and the endurance of every hardship for the love of Christ, these will give a man great expectations of a happy death.

You can do many good works when in good health; what can you do when you are ill? Few are made better by sickness. Likewise they who undertake many pilgrimages seldom become holy.

Do not put your trust in friends and relatives, and do not put off the care of your soul till later, for men will forget you more quickly than you think. It is better to provide now, in time, and send some good account ahead of you than to rely on the help of others. If you do not care for your own welfare now, who will care when you are gone?

The present is very precious; these are the days of salvation; now is the acceptable time. How sad that you do not spend the time in which you might purchase everlasting life in a better way. The time will come when you will want just one day, just one hour in which to make amends, and do you know whether you will obtain it?

See, then, dearly beloved, the great danger from which you can free yourself and the great fear from which you can be saved, if only you will always be wary and mindful of death. Try to live now in such a manner that at the moment of death you may be glad rather than fearful. Learn to die to the world now, that then you may begin to live with Christ. Learn to spurn all things now, that then you may freely go to Him. Chastise your body in penance now, that then you may have the confidence born of certainty.

Ah, foolish man, why do you plan to live long when you are not sure of living even a day? How many have been deceived and suddenly snatched away! How often have you heard of persons being killed by drownings, by fatal falls from high places, of persons dying at meals, at play, in fires, by the sword, in pestilence, or at the hands of robbers! Death is the end of everyone and the life of man quickly passes away like a shadow.

Who will remember you when you are dead? Who will pray for you? Do now, beloved, what you can, because you do not know when you will die, nor what your fate will be after death. Gather for yourself the riches of immortality while you have time. Think of nothing but your salvation. Care only for the things of God. Make friends for yourself now by honoring the saints of God, by imitating their actions, so that when you depart this life they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.

Keep yourself as a stranger here on earth, a pilgrim whom its affairs do not concern at all. Keep your heart free and raise it up to God, for you have not

here a lasting home. To Him direct your daily prayers, your sighs and tears,
that your soul may merit after death to pass in happiness to the Lord.

The Twenty-Fourth Chapter

Judgment and the Punishment of Sin

IN ALL things consider the end; how you shall stand before the strict Judge from Whom nothing is hidden and Who will pronounce judgment in all justice, accepting neither bribes nor excuses. And you, miserable and wretched sinner, who fear even the countenance of an angry man, what answer will you make to the God Who knows all your sins? Why do you not provide for yourself against the day of judgment when no man can be excused or defended by another because each will have enough to do to answer for himself? In this life your work is profitable, your tears acceptable, your sighs audible, your sorrow satisfying and purifying.

The patient man goes through a great and salutary purgatory when he grieves more over the malice of one who harms him than for his own injury; when he prays readily for his enemies and forgives offenses from his heart; when he does not hesitate to ask pardon of others; when he is more easily moved to pity than to anger; when he does frequent violence to himself and tries to bring the body into complete subjection to the spirit.

It is better to atone for sin now and to cut away vices than to keep them for purgation in the hereafter. In truth, we deceive ourselves by our ill-advised love of the flesh. What will that fire feed upon but our sins? The more we spare ourselves now and the more we satisfy the flesh, the harder will the reckoning be and the more we keep for the burning.

For a man will be more grievously punished in the things in which he has sinned. There the lazy will be driven with burning prongs, and gluttons tormented with unspeakable hunger and thirst; the wanton and lust-loving will be bathed in burning pitch and foul brimstone; the envious will howl in their grief like mad dogs.

Every vice will have its own proper punishment. The proud will be faced with every confusion and the avaricious pinched with the most abject want.

One hour of suffering there will be more bitter than a hundred years of the most severe penance here. In this life men sometimes rest from work and enjoy the comfort of friends, but the damned have no rest or consolation.

You must, therefore, take care and repent of your sins now so that on the day of judgment you may rest secure with the blessed. For on that day the just will stand firm against those who tortured and oppressed them, and he who now submits humbly to the judgment of men will arise to pass judgment upon them. The poor and humble will have great confidence, while the proud will be struck with fear. He who learned to be a fool in this world and to be scorned for Christ will then appear to have been wise.

In that day every trial borne in patience will be pleasing and the voice of iniquity will be stilled; the devout will be glad; the irreligious will mourn; and the mortified body will rejoice far more than if it had been pampered with every pleasure. Then the cheap garment will shine with splendor and the rich one become faded and worn; the poor cottage will be more praised than the gilded palace. In that day persevering patience will count more than all the power in this world; simple obedience will be exalted above all worldly cleverness; a good and clean conscience will gladden the heart of man far more than the philosophy of the learned; and contempt for riches will be of more weight than every treasure on earth.

Then you will find more consolation in having prayed devoutly than in having fared daintily; you will be happy that you preferred silence to prolonged gossip.

Then holy works will be of greater value than many fair words; strictness of life and hard penances will be more pleasing than all earthly delights.

Learn, then, to suffer little things now that you may not have to suffer greater ones in eternity. Prove here what you can bear hereafter. If you can suffer only a little now, how will you be able to endure eternal torment? If a little suffering makes you impatient now, what will hell fire do? In truth, you cannot have two joys: you cannot taste the pleasures of this world and afterward reign with Christ.

If your life to this moment had been full of honors and pleasures, what good would it do if at this instant you should die? All is vanity, therefore, except to love God and to serve Him alone.

He who loves God with all his heart does not fear death or punishment or judgment or hell, because perfect love assures access to God.

It is no wonder that he who still delights in sin fears death and judgment.

It is good, however, that even if love does not as yet restrain you from evil, at least the fear of hell does. The man who casts aside the fear of God cannot continue long in goodness but will quickly fall into the snares of the devil.

The Twenty-Fifth Chapter

Zeal in Amending our Lives

BE WATCHFUL and diligent in God's service and often think of why you left the world and came here. Was it not that you might live for God and become a spiritual man? Strive earnestly for perfection, then, because in a short time you will receive the reward of your labor, and neither fear nor sorrow shall come upon you at the hour of death.

Labor a little now, and soon you shall find great rest, in truth, eternal joy; for if you continue faithful and diligent in doing, God will undoubtedly be faithful and generous in rewarding. Continue to have reasonable hope of gaining salvation, but do not act as though you were certain of it lest you grow indolent and proud.

One day when a certain man who wavered often and anxiously between hope and fear was struck with sadness, he knelt in humble prayer before the altar of a church. While meditating on these things, he said: "Oh if I but knew whether I should persevere to the end!" Instantly he heard within the divine answer: "If you knew this, what would you do? Do now what you would do then and you will be quite secure." Immediately consoled and comforted, he resigned himself to the divine will and the anxious uncertainty ceased. His curiosity no longer sought to know what the future held for him, and he tried instead to find the perfect, the acceptable will of God in the beginning and end of every good work.

"Trust thou in the Lord and do good," says the Prophet; "dwell in the land and thou shalt feed on its riches."⁸

There is one thing that keeps many from zealously improving their lives, that is, dread of the difficulty, the toil of battle. Certainly they who try bravely to overcome the most difficult and unpleasant obstacles far outstrip others in the pursuit of virtue. A man makes the most progress and merits the most grace precisely in those matters wherein he gains the greatest victories

over self and most mortifies his will. True, each one has his own difficulties to meet and conquer, but a diligent and sincere man will make greater progress even though he have more passions than one who is more even-tempered but less concerned about virtue.

Two things particularly further improvement—to withdraw oneself forcibly from those vices to which nature is viciously inclined, and to work fervently for those graces which are most needed.

Study also to guard against and to overcome the faults which in others very frequently displease you. Make the best of every opportunity, so that if you see or hear good example you may be moved to imitate it. On the other hand, take care lest you be guilty of those things which you consider reprehensible, or if you have ever been guilty of them, try to correct yourself as soon as possible. As you see others, so they see you.

How pleasant and sweet to behold brethren fervent and devout, well mannered and disciplined! How sad and painful to see them wandering in dissolution, not practicing the things to which they are called! How hurtful it is to neglect the purpose of their vocation and to attend to what is not their business!

Remember the purpose you have undertaken, and keep in mind the image of the Crucified. Even though you may have walked for many years on the pathway to God, you may well be ashamed if, with the image of Christ before you, you do not try to make yourself still more like Him.

The religious who concerns himself intently and devoutly with our Lord's most holy life and passion will find there an abundance of all things useful and necessary for him. He need not seek for anything better than Jesus.

If the Crucified should come to our hearts, how quickly and abundantly we would learn!

A fervent religious accepts all the things that are commanded him and does them well, but a negligent and lukewarm religious has trial upon trial, and suffers anguish from every side because he has no consolation within and is forbidden to seek it from without. The religious who does not live up to his rule exposes himself to dreadful ruin, and he who wishes to be more free and untrammelled will always be in trouble, for something or other will always displease him.

How do so many other religious who are confined in cloistered discipline get along? They seldom go out, they live in contemplation, their food is poor, their clothing coarse, they work hard, they speak but little, keep long vigils,

rise early, pray much, read frequently, and subject themselves to all sorts of discipline. Think of the Carthusians and the Cistercians, the monks and nuns of different orders, how every night they rise to sing praise to the Lord. It would be a shame if you should grow lazy in such holy service when so many religious have already begun to rejoice in God.

If there were nothing else to do but praise the Lord God with all your heart and voice, if you had never to eat, or drink, or sleep, but could praise God always and occupy yourself solely with spiritual pursuits, how much happier you would be than you are now, a slave to every necessity of the body! Would that there were no such needs, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul which, sad to say, we taste too seldom!

When a man reaches a point where he seeks no solace from any creature, then he begins to relish God perfectly. Then also he will be content no matter what may happen to him. He will neither rejoice over great things nor grieve over small ones, but will place himself entirely and confidently in the hands of God, Who for him is all in all, to Whom nothing ever perishes or dies, for Whom all things live, and Whom they serve as He desires.

Always remember your end and do not forget that lost time never returns. Without care and diligence you will never acquire virtue. When you begin to grow lukewarm, you are falling into the beginning of evil; but if you give yourself to fervor, you will find peace and will experience less hardship because of God's grace and the love of virtue.

A fervent and diligent man is ready for all things. It is greater work to resist vices and passions than to sweat in physical toil. He who does not overcome small faults, shall fall little by little into greater ones.

If you have spent the day profitably, you will always be happy at eventide. Watch over yourself, arouse yourself, warn yourself, and regardless of what becomes of others, do not neglect yourself. The more violence you do to yourself, the more progress you will make.



ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

BOOK TWO

The Interior Life



THE PURIFICATION OF THE VIRGIN

The First Chapter

Meditation

THE kingdom of God is within you,” says the Lord.⁹

Turn, then, to God with all your heart. Forsake this wretched world and your soul shall find rest. Learn to despise external things, to devote yourself to those that are within, and you will see the kingdom of God come unto you, that kingdom which is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, gifts not given to the impious.

Christ will come to you offering His consolation, if you prepare a fit dwelling for Him in your heart, whose beauty and glory, wherein He takes delight, are all from within. His visits with the inward man are frequent, His communion sweet and full of consolation, His peace great, and His intimacy wonderful indeed.

Therefore, faithful soul, prepare your heart for this Bridegroom that He may come and dwell within you; He Himself says: “If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him.”¹⁰

Give place, then, to Christ, but deny entrance to all others, for when you have Christ you are rich and He is sufficient for you. He will provide for you. He will supply your every want, so that you need not trust in frail, changeable men. Christ remains forever, standing firmly with us to the end.

Do not place much confidence in weak and mortal man, helpful and friendly though he be; and do not grieve too much if he sometimes opposes and contradicts you. Those who are with us today may be against us tomorrow, and vice versa, for men change with the wind. Place all your trust in God; let Him be your fear and your love. He will answer for you; He will do what is best for you.

You have here no lasting home. You are a stranger and a pilgrim wherever you may be, and you shall have no rest until you are wholly united with

Christ.

Why do you look about here when this is not the place of your repose? Dwell rather upon heaven and give but a passing glance to all earthly things. They all pass away, and you together with them. Take care, then, that you do not cling to them lest you be entrapped and perish. Fix your mind on the Most High, and pray unceasingly to Christ.

If you do not know how to meditate on heavenly things, direct your thoughts to Christ's passion and willingly behold His sacred wounds. If you turn devoutly to the wounds and precious stigmata of Christ, you will find great comfort in suffering, you will mind but little the scorn of men, and you will easily bear their slanderous talk.

When Christ was in the world, He was despised by men; in the hour of need He was forsaken by acquaintances and left by friends to the depths of scorn. He was willing to suffer and to be despised; do you dare to complain of anything? He had enemies and defamers; do you want everyone to be your friend, your benefactor? How can your patience be rewarded if no adversity test it? How can you be a friend of Christ if you are not willing to suffer any hardship? Suffer with Christ and for Christ if you wish to reign with Him.

Had you but once entered into perfect communion with Jesus or tasted a little of His ardent love, you would care nothing at all for your own comfort or discomfort but would rejoice in the reproach you suffer; for love of Him makes a man despise himself.

A man who is a lover of Jesus and of truth, a truly interior man who is free from uncontrolled affections, can turn to God at will and rise above himself to enjoy spiritual peace.

He who tastes life as it really is, not as men say or think it is, is indeed wise with the wisdom of God rather than of men.

He who learns to live the interior life and to take little account of outward things, does not seek special places or times to perform devout exercises. A spiritual man quickly recollects himself because he has never wasted his attention upon externals. No outside work, no business that cannot wait stands in his way. He adjusts himself to things as they happen. He whose disposition is well ordered cares nothing about the strange, perverse behavior of others, for a man is upset and distracted only in proportion as he engrosses himself in externals.

If all were well with you, therefore, and if you were purified from all sin, everything would tend to your good and be to your profit. But because you

are as yet neither entirely dead to self nor free from all earthly affection, there is much that often displeases and disturbs you. Nothing so mars and defiles the heart of man as impure attachment to created things. But if you refuse external consolation, you will be able to contemplate heavenly things and often to experience interior joy.

The Second Chapter

Humility

BE NOT troubled about those who are with you or against you, but take care that God be with you in everything you do. Keep your conscience clear and God will protect you, for the malice of man cannot harm one whom God wishes to help. If you know how to suffer in silence, you will undoubtedly experience God's help. He knows when and how to deliver you; therefore, place yourself in His hands, for it is a divine prerogative to help men and free them from all distress.

It is often good for us to have others know our faults and rebuke them, for it gives us greater humility. When a man humbles himself because of his faults, he easily placates those about him and readily appeases those who are angry with him.

It is the humble man whom God protects and liberates; it is the humble whom He loves and consoles. To the humble He turns and upon them bestows great grace, that after their humiliation He may raise them up to glory. He reveals His secrets to the humble, and with kind invitation bids them come to Him. Thus, the humble man enjoys peace in the midst of many vexations, because his trust is in God, not in the world. Hence, you must not think that you have made any progress until you look upon yourself as inferior to all others.

The Third Chapter

Goodness and Peace in Man

FIRST keep peace with yourself; then you will be able to bring peace to others. A peaceful man does more good than a learned man. Whereas a passionate man turns even good to evil and is quick to believe evil, the peaceful man, being good himself, turns all things to good.

The man who is at perfect ease is never suspicious, but the disturbed and discontented spirit is upset by many a suspicion. He neither rests himself nor permits others to do so. He often says what ought not to be said and leaves undone what ought to be done. He is concerned with the duties of others but neglects his own.

Direct your zeal, therefore, first upon yourself; then you may with justice exercise it upon those about you. You are well versed in coloring your own actions with excuses which you will not accept from others, though it would be more just to accuse yourself and excuse your brother. If you wish men to bear with you, you must bear with them. Behold, how far you are from true charity and humility which does not know how to be angry with anyone, or to be indignant save only against self!

It is no great thing to associate with the good and gentle, for such association is naturally pleasing. Everyone enjoys a peaceful life and prefers persons of congenial habits. But to be able to live at peace with harsh and perverse men, or with the undisciplined and those who irritate us, is a great grace, a praiseworthy and manly thing.

Some people live at peace with themselves and with their fellow men, but others are never at peace with themselves nor do they bring it to anyone else. These latter are a burden to everyone, but they are more of a burden to themselves. A few, finally, live at peace with themselves and try to restore it to others.

Now, all our peace in this miserable life is found in humbly enduring

suffering rather than in being free from it. He who knows best how to suffer will enjoy the greater peace, because he is the conqueror of himself, the master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.

The Fourth Chapter

Purity of Mind and Unity of Purpose

A MAN is raised up from the earth by two wings—simplicity and purity. There must be simplicity in his intention and purity in his desires. Simplicity leads to God, purity embraces and enjoys Him.

If your heart is free from ill-ordered affection, no good deed will be difficult for you. If you aim at and seek after nothing but the pleasure of God and the welfare of your neighbor, you will enjoy freedom within.

If your heart were right, then every created thing would be a mirror of life for you and a book of holy teaching, for there is no creature so small and worthless that it does not show forth the goodness of God. If inwardly you were good and pure, you would see all things clearly and understand them rightly, for a pure heart penetrates to heaven and hell, and as a man is within, so he judges what is without. If there be joy in the world, the pure of heart certainly possess it; and if there be anguish and affliction anywhere, an evil conscience knows it too well.

As iron cast into fire loses its rust and becomes glowing white, so he who turns completely to God is stripped of his sluggishness and changed into a new man. When a man begins to grow lax, he fears a little toil and welcomes external comfort, but when he begins perfectly to conquer himself and to walk bravely in the ways of God, then he thinks those things less difficult which he thought so hard before.

The Fifth Chapter

Ourselves

WE MUST not rely too much upon ourselves, for grace and understanding are often lacking in us. We have but little inborn light, and this we quickly lose through negligence. Often we are not aware that we are so blind in heart. Meanwhile we do wrong, and then do worse in excusing it. At times we are moved by passion, and we think it zeal. We take others to task for small mistakes, and overlook greater ones in ourselves. We are quick enough to feel and brood over the things we suffer from others, but we think nothing of how much others suffer from us. If a man would weigh his own deeds fully and rightly, he would find little cause to pass severe judgment on others.

The interior man puts the care of himself before all other concerns, and he who attends to himself carefully does not find it hard to hold his tongue about others. You will never be devout of heart unless you are thus silent about the affairs of others and pay particular attention to yourself. If you attend wholly to God and yourself, you will be little disturbed by what you see about you.

Where are your thoughts when they are not upon yourself? And after attending to various things, what have you gained if you have neglected self? If you wish to have true peace of mind and unity of purpose, you must cast all else aside and keep only yourself before your eyes.

You will make great progress if you keep yourself free from all temporal cares, for to value anything that is temporal is a great mistake. Consider nothing great, nothing high, nothing pleasing, nothing acceptable, except God Himself or that which is of God. Consider the consolations of creatures as vanity, for the soul that loves God scorns all things that are inferior to Him. God alone, the eternal and infinite, satisfies all, bringing comfort to the soul and true joy to the body.

The Sixth Chapter

The Joy of a Good Conscience

THE glory of a good man is the testimony of a good conscience. Therefore, keep your conscience good and you will always enjoy happiness, for a good conscience can bear a great deal and can bring joy even in the midst of adversity. But an evil conscience is ever restive and fearful.

Sweet shall be your rest if your heart does not reproach you.

Do not rejoice unless you have done well. Sinners never experience true interior joy or peace, for “there is no peace to the wicked,” says the Lord.¹¹ Even if they say: “We are at peace, no evil shall befall us and no one dares to hurt us,” do not believe them; for the wrath of God will arise quickly, and their deeds will be brought to naught and their thoughts will perish.

To glory in adversity is not hard for the man who loves, for this is to glory in the cross of the Lord. But the glory given or received of men is short lived, and the glory of the world is ever companioned by sorrow. The glory of the good, however, is in their conscience and not in the lips of men, for the joy of the just is from God and in God, and their gladness is founded on truth.

The man who longs for the true, eternal glory does not care for that of time; and he who seeks passing fame or does not in his heart despise it, undoubtedly cares little for the glory of heaven.

He who minds neither praise nor blame possesses great peace of heart and, if his conscience is good, he will easily be contented and at peace.

Praise adds nothing to your holiness, nor does blame take anything from it. You are what you are, and you cannot be said to be better than you are in God’s sight. If you consider well what you are within, you will not care what men say about you. They look to appearances but God looks to the heart. They consider the deed but God weighs the motive.

It is characteristic of a humble soul always to do good and to think little of itself. It is a mark of great purity and deep faith to look for no consolation in

created things. The man who desires no justification from without has clearly entrusted himself to God: “For not he who commendeth himself is approved,” says St. Paul, “but he whom God commendeth.”^{[12](#)}

To walk with God interiorly, to be free from any external affection—this is the state of the inward man.

The Seventh Chapter

Loving Jesus Above All Things

BLESSED is he who appreciates what it is to love Jesus and who despises himself for the sake of Jesus. Give up all other love for His, since He wishes to be loved alone above all things.

Affection for creatures is deceitful and inconstant, but the love of Jesus is true and enduring. He who clings to a creature will fall with its frailty, but he who gives himself to Jesus will ever be strengthened.

Love Him, then; keep Him as a friend. He will not leave you as others do, or let you suffer lasting death. Sometime, whether you will or not, you will have to part with everything. Cling, therefore, to Jesus in life and death; trust yourself to the glory of Him who alone can help you when all others fail.

Your Beloved is such that He will not accept what belongs to another—He wants your heart for Himself alone, to be enthroned therein as King in His own right. If you but knew how to free yourself entirely from all creatures, Jesus would gladly dwell within you.

You will find, apart from Him, that nearly all the trust you place in men is a total loss. Therefore, neither confide in nor depend upon a wind-shaken reed, for “all flesh is grass”¹³ and all its glory, like the flower of grass, will fade away.

You will quickly be deceived if you look only to the outward appearance of men, and you will often be disappointed if you seek comfort and gain in them. If, however, you seek Jesus in all things, you will surely find Him. Likewise, if you seek yourself, you will find yourself—to your own ruin. For the man who does not seek Jesus does himself much greater harm than the whole world and all his enemies could ever do.

The Eighth Chapter

The Intimate Friendship of Jesus

WHEN Jesus is near, all is well and nothing seems difficult. When He is absent, all is hard. When Jesus does not speak within, all other comfort is empty, but if He says only a word, it brings great consolation.

Did not Mary Magdalen rise at once from her weeping when Martha said to her: “The Master is come, and calleth for thee”?¹⁴ Happy is the hour when Jesus calls one from tears to joy of spirit.

How dry and hard you are without Jesus! How foolish and vain if you desire anything but Him! Is it not a greater loss than losing the whole world? For what, without Jesus, can the world give you? Life without Him is a relentless hell, but living with Him is a sweet paradise. If Jesus be with you, no enemy can harm you.

He who finds Jesus finds a rare treasure, indeed, a good above every good, whereas he who loses Him loses more than the whole world. The man who lives without Jesus is the poorest of the poor, whereas no one is so rich as the man who lives in His grace.

It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus, and great wisdom to know how to keep Him. Be humble and peaceful, and Jesus will be with you. Be devout and calm, and He will remain with you. You may quickly drive Him away and lose His grace, if you turn back to the outside world. And, if you drive Him away and lose Him, to whom will you go and whom will you then seek as a friend? You cannot live well without a friend, and if Jesus be not your friend above all else, you will be very sad and desolate. Thus, you are acting foolishly if you trust or rejoice in any other. Choose the opposition of the whole world rather than offend Jesus. Of all those who are dear to you, let Him be your special love. Let all things be loved for the sake of Jesus, but Jesus for His own sake.

Jesus Christ must be loved alone with a special love for He alone, of all

friends, is good and faithful. For Him and in Him you must love friends and foes alike, and pray to Him that all may know and love Him.

Never desire special praise or love, for that belongs to God alone Who has no equal. Never wish that anyone's affection be centered in you, nor let yourself be taken up with the love of anyone, but let Jesus be in you and in every good man. Be pure and free within, unentangled with any creature.

You must bring to God a clean and open heart if you wish to attend and see how sweet the Lord is. Truly you will never attain this happiness unless His grace prepares you and draws you on so that you may forsake all things to be united with Him alone.

When the grace of God comes to a man he can do all things, but when it leaves him he becomes poor and weak, abandoned, as it were, to affliction. Yet, in this condition he should not become dejected or despair. On the contrary, he should calmly await the will of God and bear whatever befalls him in praise of Jesus Christ, for after winter comes summer, after night, the day, and after the storm, a great calm.

The Ninth Chapter

Wanting No Share in Comfort

IT IS not hard to spurn human consolation when we have the divine. It is, however, a very great thing indeed to be able to live without either divine or human comforting and for the honor of God willingly to endure this exile of heart, not to seek oneself in anything, and to think nothing of one's own merit.

Does it matter much, if at the coming of grace, you are cheerful and devout? This is an hour desired by all, for he whom the grace of God sustains travels easily enough. What wonder if he feel no burden when borne up by the Almighty and led on by the Supreme Guide! For we are always glad to have something to comfort us, and only with difficulty does a man divest himself of self.

The holy martyr, Lawrence, with his priest, conquered the world because he despised everything in it that seemed pleasing to him, and for love of Christ patiently suffered the great high priest of God, Sixtus, whom he loved dearly, to be taken from him. Thus, by his love for the Creator he overcame the love of man, and chose instead of human consolation the good pleasure of God. So you, too, must learn to part with an intimate and much-needed friend for the love of God. Do not take it to heart when you are deserted by a friend, knowing that in the end we must all be parted from one another.

A man must fight long and bravely against himself before he learns to master himself fully and to direct all his affections toward God. When he trusts in himself, he easily takes to human consolation. The true lover of Christ, however, who sincerely pursues virtue, does not fall back upon consolations nor seek such pleasures of sense, but prefers severe trials and hard labors for the sake of Christ.

When, therefore, spiritual consolation is given by God, receive it gratefully, but understand that it is His gift and not your meriting. Do not

exult, do not be overjoyed, do not be presumptuous, but be the humbler for the gift, more careful and wary in all your actions, for this hour will pass and temptation will come in its wake.

When consolation is taken away, do not at once despair but wait humbly and patiently for the heavenly visit, since God can restore to you more abundant solace.

This is neither new nor strange to one who knows God's ways, for such change of fortune often visited the great saints and prophets of old. Thus there was one who, when grace was with him, declared: "In my prosperity I said: I shall never be moved." But when grace was taken away, he adds what he experienced in himself: "Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled." Meanwhile he does not despair; rather he prays more earnestly to the Lord, saying: "To Thee, O Lord, will I cry; and I will make supplication to my God." At length, he receives the fruit of his prayer, and testifying that he was heard, says "The Lord hath heard, and hath had mercy on me: the Lord became my helper." And how was he helped? "Thou hast turned," he says, "my mourning into joy, and hast surrounded me with gladness."¹⁵

If this is the case with great saints, we who are weak and poor ought not to despair because we are fervent at times and at other times cold, for the spirit comes and goes according to His will. Of this the blessed Job declared: "Thou visitest him early in the morning, and Thou provest him suddenly."¹⁶

In what can I hope, then, or in whom ought I trust, save only in the great mercy of God and the hope of heavenly grace? For though I have with me good men, devout brethren, faithful friends, holy books, beautiful treatises, sweet songs and hymns, all these help and please but little when I am abandoned by grace and left to my poverty. At such times there is no better remedy than patience and resignation of self to the will of God.

I have never met a man so religious and devout that he has not experienced at some time a withdrawal of grace and felt a lessening of fervor. No saint was so sublimely rapt and enlightened as not to be tempted before and after. He, indeed, is not worthy of the sublime contemplation of God who has not been tried by some tribulation for the sake of God. For temptation is usually the sign preceding the consolation that is to follow, and heavenly consolation is promised to all those proved by temptation. "To him that overcometh," says Christ, "I will give to eat of the Tree of Life."¹⁷ Divine consolation, then, is given in order to make a man braver in enduring

adversity, and temptation follows in order that he may not pride himself on the good he has done.

The devil does not sleep, nor is the flesh yet dead; therefore, you must never cease your preparation for battle, because on the right and on the left are enemies who never rest.

The Tenth Chapter

Appreciating God's Grace

WHY do you look for rest when you were born to work? Resign yourself to patience rather than to comfort, to carrying your cross rather than to enjoyment.

What man in the world, if he could always have them, would not readily accept consolation and spiritual joy, benefits which excel all earthly delights and pleasures of the body? The latter, indeed, are either vain or base, while spiritual joys, born of virtue and infused by God into pure minds, are alone truly pleasant and noble.

Now, since the moment of temptation is always nigh, since false freedom of mind and overconfidence in self are serious obstacles to these visitations from heaven, a man can never enjoy them just as he wishes.

God does well in giving the grace of consolation, but man does evil in not returning everything gratefully to God. Thus, the gifts of grace cannot flow in us when we are ungrateful to the Giver, when we do not return them to the Fountainhead. Grace is always given to him who is duly grateful, and what is wont to be given the humble will be taken away from the proud.

I do not desire consolation that robs me of contrition, nor do I care for contemplation that leads to pride, for not all that is high is holy, nor is all that is sweet good, nor every desire pure, nor all that is dear to us pleasing to God. I accept willingly the grace whereby I become more humble and contrite, more willing to renounce self.

The man who has been taught by the gift of grace, and who learns by the lash of its withdrawal, will never dare to attribute any good to himself, but will rather admit his poverty and emptiness. Give to God what is God's and ascribe to yourself what is yours. Give Him thanks, then, for His grace, but place upon yourself alone the blame and the punishment your fault deserves.

Always take the lowest place and the highest will be given you, for the

highest cannot exist apart from the lowest. The saints who are greatest before God are those who consider themselves the least, and the more humble they are within themselves, so much the more glorious they are. Since they do not desire vainglory, they are full of truth and heavenly glory. Being established and strengthened in God, they can by no means be proud. They attribute to God whatever good they have received; they seek no glory from one another but only that which comes from God alone. They desire above all things that He be praised in themselves and in all His saints—this is their constant purpose.

Be grateful, therefore, for the least gift and you will be worthy to receive a greater. Consider the least gift as the greatest, the most contemptible as something special. And, if you but look to the dignity of the Giver, no gift will appear too small or worthless. Even though He give punishments and scourges, accept them, because He acts for our welfare in whatever He allows to befall us.

He who desires to keep the grace of God ought to be grateful when it is given and patient when it is withdrawn. Let him pray that it return; let him be cautious and humble lest he lose it.

The Eleventh Chapter

Few Love the Cross of Jesus

JESUS has always many who love His heavenly kingdom, but few who bear His cross. He has many who desire consolation, but few who care for trial. He finds many to share His table, but few to take part in His fasting. All desire to be happy with Him; few wish to suffer anything for Him. Many follow Him to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of His passion. Many revere His miracles; few approach the shame of the Cross. Many love Him as long as they encounter no hardship; many praise and bless Him as long as they receive some comfort from Him. But if Jesus hides Himself and leaves them for a while, they fall either into complaints or into deep dejection. Those, on the contrary, who love Him for His own sake and not for any comfort of their own, bless Him in all trial and anguish of heart as well as in the bliss of consolation. Even if He should never give them consolation, yet they would continue to praise Him and wish always to give Him thanks. What power there is in pure love for Jesus—love that is free from all self-interest and self-love!

Do not those who always seek consolation deserve to be called mercenaries? Do not those who always think of their own profit and gain prove that they love themselves rather than Christ? Where can a man be found who desires to serve God for nothing? Rarely indeed is a man so spiritual as to strip himself of all things. And who shall find a man so truly poor in spirit as to be free from every creature? His value is like that of things brought from the most distant lands.

If a man give all his wealth, it is nothing; if he do great penance, it is little; if he gain all knowledge, he is still far afield; if he have great virtue and much ardent devotion, he still lacks a great deal, and especially, the one thing that is most necessary to him. What is this one thing? That leaving all, he forsake himself, completely renounce himself, and give up all private affections.

Then, when he has done all that he knows ought to be done, let him consider it as nothing, let him make little of what may be considered great; let him in all honesty call himself an unprofitable servant. For truth itself has said: “When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: we are unprofitable servants.”¹⁸

Then he will be truly poor and stripped in spirit, and with the prophet may say: “I am alone and poor.”¹⁹ No one, however, is more wealthy than such a man; no one is more powerful, no one freer than he who knows how to leave all things and think of himself as the least of all.

The Twelfth Chapter

The Royal Road of the Holy Cross

TO MANY the saying, “Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Me,”²⁰ seems hard, but it will be much harder to hear that final word: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”²¹ Those who hear the word of the cross and follow it willingly now, need not fear that they will hear of eternal damnation on the day of judgment. This sign of the cross will be in the heavens when the Lord comes to judge. Then all the servants of the cross, who during life made themselves one with the Crucified, will draw near with great trust to Christ, the judge.

Why, then, do you fear to take up the cross when through it you can win a kingdom? In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection from enemies, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross is joy of spirit, in the cross is highest virtue, in the cross is perfect holiness. There is no salvation of soul nor hope of everlasting life but in the cross.

Take up your cross, therefore, and follow Jesus, and you shall enter eternal life. He Himself opened the way before you in carrying His cross, and upon it He died for you, that you, too, might take up your cross and long to die upon it. If you die with Him, you shall also live with Him, and if you share His suffering, you shall also share His glory.

Behold, in the cross is everything, and upon your dying on the cross everything depends. There is no other way to life and to true inward peace than the way of the holy cross and daily mortification. Go where you will, seek what you will, you will not find a higher way, nor a less exalted but safer way, than the way of the holy cross. Arrange and order everything to suit your will and judgment, and still you will find that some suffering must always be borne, willingly or unwillingly, and thus you will always find the cross.

Either you will experience bodily pain or you will undergo tribulation of spirit in your soul. At times you will be forsaken by God, at times troubled by those about you and, what is worse, you will often grow weary of yourself. You cannot escape, you cannot be relieved by any remedy or comfort but must bear with it as long as God wills. For He wishes you to learn to bear trial without consolation, to submit yourself wholly to Him that you may become more humble through suffering. No one understands the passion of Christ so thoroughly or heartily as the man whose lot it is to suffer the like himself.

The cross, therefore, is always ready; it awaits you everywhere. No matter where you may go, you cannot escape it, for wherever you go you take yourself with you and shall always find yourself. Turn where you will—above, below, without, or within—you will find a cross in everything, and everywhere you must have patience if you would have peace within and merit an eternal crown.

If you carry the cross willingly, it will carry and lead you to the desired goal where indeed there shall be no more suffering, but here there shall be. If you carry it unwillingly, you create a burden for yourself and increase the load, though still you have to bear it. If you cast away one cross, you will find another and perhaps a heavier one. Do you expect to escape what no mortal man can ever avoid? Which of the saints was without a cross or trial on this earth? Not even Jesus Christ, our Lord, Whose every hour on earth knew the pain of His passion. “It behooveth Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, . . . and so enter into his glory.”²² How is it that you look for another way than this, the royal way of the holy cross?

The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom, and do you seek rest and enjoyment for yourself? You deceive yourself, you are mistaken if you seek anything but to suffer, for this mortal life is full of miseries and marked with crosses on all sides. Indeed, the more spiritual progress a person makes, so much heavier will he frequently find the cross, because as his love increases, the pain of his exile also increases.

Yet such a man, though afflicted in many ways, is not without hope of consolation, because he knows that great reward is coming to him for bearing his cross. And when he carries it willingly, every pang of tribulation is changed into hope of solace from God. Besides, the more the flesh is distressed by affliction, so much the more is the spirit strengthened by inward grace. Not infrequently a man is so strengthened by his love of trials and

hardship in his desire to conform to the cross of Christ, that he does not wish to be without sorrow or pain, since he believes he will be the more acceptable to God if he is able to endure more and more grievous things for His sake.

It is the grace of Christ, and not the virtue of man, which can and does bring it about that through fervor of spirit frail flesh learns to love and to gain what it naturally hates and shuns.

To carry the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body and bring it to subjection, to flee honors, to endure contempt gladly, to despise self and wish to be despised, to suffer any adversity and loss, to desire no prosperous days on earth—this is not man's way. If you rely upon yourself, you can do none of these things, but if you trust in the Lord, strength will be given you from heaven and the world and the flesh will be made subject to your word. You will not even fear your enemy, the devil, if you are armed with faith and signed with the cross of Christ.

Set yourself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear bravely the cross of your Lord, Who out of love was crucified for you. Be ready to suffer many adversities and many kinds of trouble in this miserable life, for troublesome and miserable life will always be, no matter where you are; and so you will find it wherever you may hide. Thus it must be; and there is no way to evade the trials and sorrows of life but to bear them.

Drink the chalice of the Lord with affection if you wish to be His friend and to have part with Him. Leave consolation to God; let Him do as most pleases Him. On your part, be ready to bear sufferings and consider them the greatest consolation, for even though you alone were to undergo them all, the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.

When you shall have come to the point where suffering is sweet and acceptable for the sake of Christ, then consider yourself fortunate, for you have found paradise on earth. But as long as suffering irks you and you seek to escape, so long will you be unfortunate, and the tribulation you seek to evade will follow you everywhere. If you put your mind to the things you ought to consider, that is, to suffering and death, you would soon be in a better state and would find peace.

Although you were taken to the third heaven with Paul, you were not thereby insured against suffering. Jesus said: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake."²³ To suffer, then, remains your lot, if you mean to love Jesus and serve Him forever.

If you were but worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus, what

great glory would be in store for you, what great joy to all the saints of God, what great edification to those about you! For all men praise patience though there are few who wish to practice it.

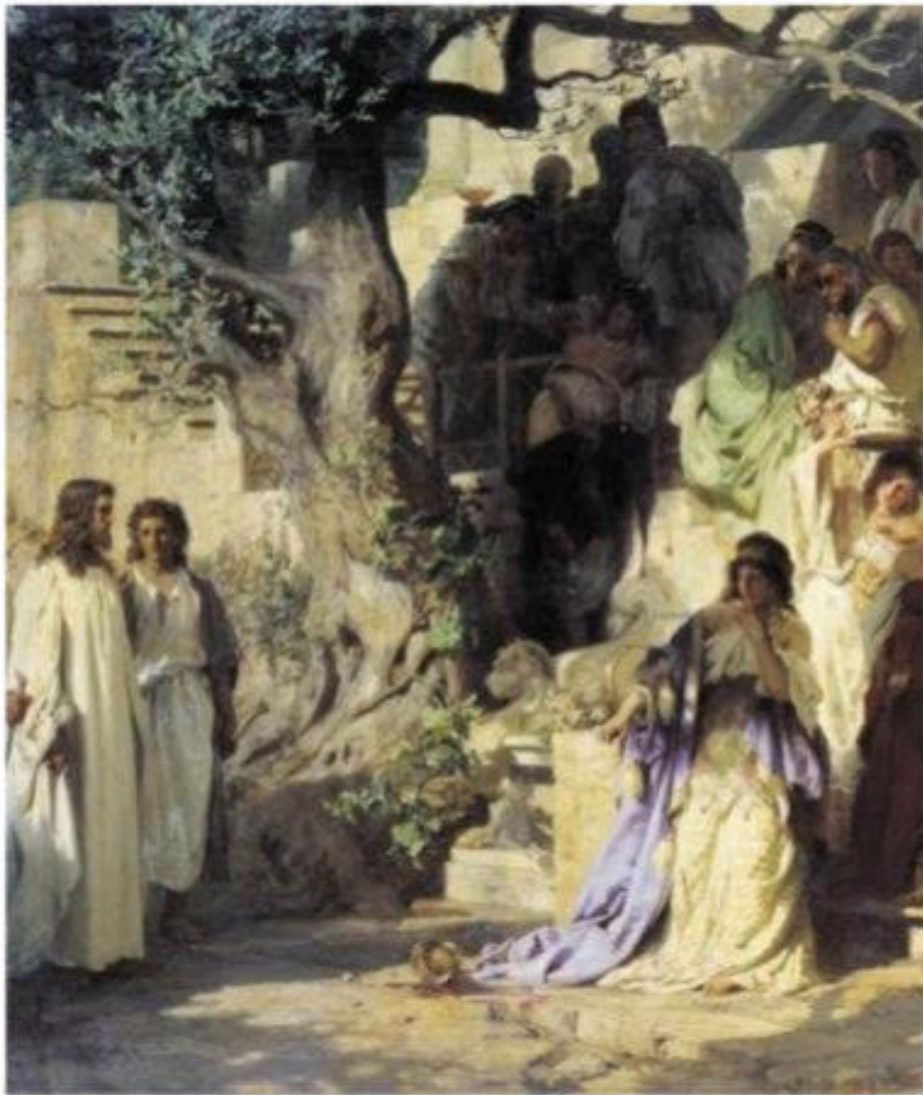
With good reason, then, ought you to be willing to suffer a little for Christ since many suffer much more for the world.

Realize that you must lead a dying life; the more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live unto God.

No man is fit to enjoy heaven unless he has resigned himself to suffer hardship for Christ. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more helpful for you on this earth than to suffer willingly for Christ. If you had to make a choice, you ought to wish rather to suffer for Christ than to enjoy many consolations, for thus you would be more like Christ and more like all the saints. Our merit and progress consist not in many pleasures and comforts but rather in enduring great afflictions and sufferings.

If, indeed, there were anything better or more useful for man's salvation than suffering, Christ would have shown it by word and example. But He clearly exhorts The Disciples who follow Him and all who wish to follow Him to carry the cross, saying: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."²⁴

When, therefore, we have read and searched all that has been written, let this be the final conclusion—that through much suffering we must enter into the kingdom of God.



JESUS CHRIST AND THE SINNER

BOOK THREE

Internal Consolation



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL DEFEATING SATAN

The First Chapter

The Inward Conversation of Christ with the Faithful Soul

I WILL hear what the Lord God will speak in me.”²⁵

Blessed is the soul who hears the Lord speaking within her, who receives the word of consolation from His lips. Blessed are the ears that catch the accents of divine whispering, and pay no heed to the murmurings of this world. Blessed indeed are the ears that listen, not to the voice which sounds without, but to the truth which teaches within. Blessed are the eyes which are closed to exterior things and are fixed upon those which are interior. Blessed are they who penetrate inwardly, who try daily to prepare themselves more and more to understand mysteries. Blessed are they who long to give their time to God, and who cut themselves off from the hindrances of the world.

Consider these things, my soul, and close the door of your senses, so that you can hear what the Lord your God speaks within you. “I am your salvation,” says your Beloved. “I am your peace and your life. Remain with Me and you will find peace. Dismiss all passing things and seek the eternal. What are all temporal things but snares? And what help will all creatures be able to give you if you are deserted by the Creator?” Leave all these things, therefore, and make yourself pleasing and faithful to your Creator so that you may attain to true happiness.

The Second Chapter

Truth Speaks Inwardly Without the Sound of Words

THE DISCIPLE

SPEAK, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”²⁶ “I am Thy servant. Give me understanding that I may know Thine ordinances²⁷ . . . Incline my heart to Thine ordinances²⁸ . . . Let Thy speech distil as the dew.”²⁹

The children of Israel once said to Moses: “Speak thou to us and we will hear thee: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.”³⁰

Not so, Lord, not so do I pray. Rather with Samuel the prophet I entreat humbly and earnestly: “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” Do not let Moses or any of the prophets speak to me; but You speak, O Lord God, Who inspired and enlightened all the prophets; for You alone, without them, can instruct me perfectly, whereas they, without You, can do nothing. They, indeed, utter fine words, but they cannot impart the spirit. They do indeed speak beautifully, but if You remain silent they cannot inflame the heart. They deliver the message; You lay bare the sense. They place before us mysteries, but You unlock their meaning. They proclaim commandments; You help us to keep them. They point out the way; You give strength for the journey. They work only outwardly; You instruct and enlighten our hearts. They water on the outside; You give the increase.

They cry out words; You give understanding to the hearer.

Let not Moses speak to me, therefore, but You, the Lord my God, everlasting truth, speak lest I die and prove barren if I am merely given outward advice and am not inflamed within; lest the word heard and not kept, known and not loved, believed and not obeyed, rise up in judgment against me.

Speak, therefore, Lord, for Your servant listens. “Thou hast the words of eternal life.”³¹ Speak to me for the comfort of my soul and for the amendment

of my life, for Your praise, Your glory, and Your everlasting honor.

The Third Chapter

Listen Humbly to the Words of God. Many Do Not Heed Them

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, hear My words, words of greatest sweetness surpassing all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise men of earth. My words are spirit and life, and they are not to be weighed by man's understanding. They are not to be invoked in vanity but are to be heard in silence, and accepted with all humility and with great affection.

THE DISCIPLE

"Happy is the man whom Thou admonishest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law, to give him peace from the days of evil,"³² and that he be not desolate on earth.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

I taught the prophets from the beginning, and even to this day I continue to speak to all men. But many are hardened. Many are deaf to My voice. Most men listen more willingly to the world than to God. They are more ready to follow the appetite of their flesh than the good pleasure of God. The world, which promises small and passing things, is served with great eagerness: I promise great and eternal things and the hearts of men grow dull. Who is there that serves and obeys Me in all things with as great care as that with which the world and its masters are served?

"Be thou ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea speaketh."³³ And if you ask why, listen to the cause: for a small gain they travel far; for eternal life many will scarcely lift a foot from the ground. They seek a petty reward, and sometimes fight shamefully in law courts for a single piece of money. They are not afraid to work day and night for a trifle or an empty promise. But, for an

unchanging good, for a reward beyond estimate, for the greatest honor and for glory everlasting, it must be said to their shame that men begrudge even the least fatigue. Be ashamed, then, lazy and complaining servant, that they should be found more eager for perdition than you are for life, that they rejoice more in vanity than you in truth.

Sometimes indeed their expectations fail them, but My promise never deceives, nor does it send away empty-handed him who trusts in Me. What I have promised I will give. What I have said I will fulfill, if only a man remain faithful in My love to the end. I am the rewarder of all the good, the strong approver of all who are devoted to Me.

Write My words in your heart and meditate on them earnestly, for in time of temptation they will be very necessary. What you do not understand when you read, you will learn in the day of visitation. I am wont to visit My elect in two ways—by temptation and by consolation. To them I read two lessons daily—one reproving their vices, the other exhorting them to progress in virtue. He who has My words and despises them has that which shall condemn him on the last day.

A PRAYER FOR THE GRACE OF DEVOTION

O Lord my God, You are all my good. And who am I that I should dare to speak to You? I am Your poorest and meanest servant, a vile worm, much more poor and contemptible than I know or dare to say. Yet remember me, Lord, because I am nothing, I have nothing, and I can do nothing. You alone are good, just, and holy. You can do all things, You give all things, You fill all things: only the sinner do You leave empty-handed. Remember Your tender mercies and fill my heart with Your grace, You Who will not allow Your works to be in vain. How can I bear this life of misery unless You comfort me with Your mercy and grace? Do not turn Your face from me. Do not delay Your visitation. Do not withdraw Your consolation, lest in Your sight my soul become as desert land. Teach me, Lord, to do Your will. Teach me to live worthily and humbly in Your sight, for You are my wisdom Who know me truly, and Who knew me even before the world was made and before I was born into it.

The Fourth Chapter

We Must Walk Before God in Humility and Truth

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, walk before Me in truth, and seek Me always in the simplicity of your heart. He who walks before Me in truth shall be defended from the attacks of evil, and the truth shall free him from seducers and from the slanders of wicked men. For if the truth has made you free, then you shall be free indeed, and you shall not care for the vain words of men.

THE DISCIPLE

O Lord, it is true. I ask that it be with me as You say. Let your truth teach me. Let it guard me, and keep me safe to the end. Let it free me from all evil affection and badly ordered love, and I shall walk with You in great freedom of heart.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

I shall teach you those things which are right and pleasing to Me. Consider your sins with great displeasure and sorrow, and never think yourself to be someone because of your good works. You are truly a sinner. You are subject to many passions and entangled in them. Of yourself you always tend to nothing. You fall quickly, are quickly overcome, quickly troubled, and quickly undone. You have nothing in which you can glory, but you have many things for which you should think yourself vile, for you are much weaker than you can comprehend. Hence, let none of the things you do seem great to you. Let nothing seem important or precious or desirable except that which is everlasting. Let the eternal truth please you above all things, and let your extreme unworthiness always displease you. Fear nothing, abhor nothing, and fly nothing as you do your own vices and sins; these should be

more unpleasant for you than any material losses.

Some men walk before Me without sincerity. Led on by a certain curiosity and arrogance, they wish to know My secrets and to understand the high things of God, to the neglect of themselves and their own salvation. Through their own pride and curiosity, and because I am against them, such men often fall into great temptations and sins.

Fear the judgments of God! Dread the wrath of the Almighty! Do not discuss the works of the Most High, but examine your sins—in what serious things you have offended and how many good things you have neglected.

Some carry their devotion only in books, some in pictures, some in outward signs and figures. Some have Me on their lips when there is little of Me in their hearts. Others, indeed, with enlightened understanding and purified affections, constantly long for everlasting things; they are unwilling to hear of earthly affairs and only with reluctance do they serve the necessities of nature. These sense what the Spirit of truth speaks within them: for He teaches them to despise earthly things and to love those of heaven, to neglect the world, and each day and night to desire heaven.

The Fifth Chapter

The Wonderful Effect of Divine Love

THE DISCIPLE

I BLESS You, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, for having condescended to remember me, a poor creature. Thanks to You, O Father of mercies, God of all consolation, Who with Your comfort sometimes refresh me, who am not worthy of it. I bless You always and glorify You with Your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, forever and ever.

Ah, Lord God, my holy Lover, when You come into my heart, all that is within me will rejoice. You are my glory and the exultation of my heart. You are my hope and refuge in the day of my tribulation. But because my love is as yet weak and my virtue imperfect, I must be strengthened and comforted by You. Visit me often, therefore, and teach me Your holy discipline. Free me from evil passions and cleanse my heart of all disorderly affection so that, healed and purified within, I may be fit to love, strong to suffer, and firm to persevere.

Love is an excellent thing, a very great blessing, indeed. It makes every difficulty easy, and bears all wrongs with equanimity. For it bears a burden without being weighted and renders sweet all that is bitter. The noble love of Jesus spurs to great deeds and excites longing for that which is more perfect. Love tends upward; it will not be held down by anything low. Love wishes to be free and estranged from all worldly affections, lest its inward sight be obstructed, lest it be entangled in any temporal interest and overcome by adversity.

Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger or higher or wider; nothing is more pleasant, nothing fuller, and nothing better in heaven or on earth, for love is born of God and cannot rest except in God, Who is above all created things.

One who is in love flies, runs, and rejoices; he is free, not bound. He gives

all for all and possesses all in all, because he rests in the one sovereign Good, Who is above all things, and from Whom every good flows and proceeds. He does not look to the gift but turns himself above all gifts to the Giver.

Love often knows no limits but overflows all bounds. Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of troubles, attempts more than it is able, and does not plead impossibility, because it believes that it may and can do all things. For this reason, it is able to do all, performing and effecting much where he who does not love fails and falls.

Love is watchful. Sleeping, it does not slumber. Wearied, it is not tired. Pressed, it is not straitened. Alarmed, it is not confused, but like a living flame, a burning torch, it forces its way upward and passes unharmed through every obstacle.

If a man loves, he will know the sound of this voice. For this warm affection of soul is a loud voice crying in the ears of God, and it says: "My God, my love, You are all mine and I am all Yours. Give me an increase of love, that I may learn to taste with the inward lips of my heart how sweet it is to love, how sweet to be dissolved in love and bathe in it. Let me be rapt in love. Let me rise above self in great fervor and wonder. Let me sing the hymn of love, and let me follow You, my Love, to the heights. Let my soul exhaust itself in praising You, rejoicing out of love. Let me love You more than myself, and let me not love myself except for Your sake. In You let me love all those who truly love You, as the law of love, which shines forth from You, commands."

Love is swift, sincere, kind, pleasant, and delightful. Love is strong, patient and faithful, prudent, long-suffering, and manly. Love is never self-seeking, for in whatever a person seeks himself there he falls from love. Love is circumspect, humble, and upright. It is neither soft nor light, nor intent upon vain things. It is sober and chaste, firm and quiet, guarded in all the senses. Love is subject and obedient to superiors. It is mean and contemptible in its own eyes, devoted and thankful to God; always trusting and hoping in Him even when He is distasteful to it, for there is no living in love without sorrow. He who is not ready to suffer all things and to stand resigned to the will of the Beloved is not worthy to be called a lover. A lover must embrace willingly all that is difficult and bitter for the sake of the Beloved, and he should not turn away from Him because of adversities.

The Sixth Chapter
The Proving of a True Lover

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, you are not yet a brave and wise lover.

THE DISCIPLE

Why, Lord?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Because, on account of a slight difficulty you give up what you have undertaken and are too eager to seek consolation.

The brave lover stands firm in temptations and pays no heed to the crafty persuasions of the enemy. As I please him in prosperity, so in adversity I am not displeasing to him. The wise lover regards not so much the gift of Him Who loves as the love of Him Who gives. He regards the affection of the Giver rather than the value of the gift, and sets his Beloved above all gifts. The noble lover does not rest in the gift but in Me Who am above every gift.

All is not lost, then, if you sometimes feel less devout than you wish toward Me or My saints. That good and sweet feeling which you sometimes have is the effect of present grace and a certain foretaste of your heavenly home. You must not lean upon it too much, because it comes and goes. But to fight against evil thoughts which attack you is a sign of virtue and great merit. Do not, therefore, let strange fantasies disturb you, no matter what they concern. Hold strongly to your resolution and keep a right intention toward God.

It is not an illusion that you are sometimes rapt in ecstasy and then quickly returned to the usual follies of your heart. For these are evils which you suffer rather than commit; and so long as they displease you and you struggle

against them, it is a matter of merit and not a loss.

You must know that the old enemy tries by all means in his power to hinder your desire for good and to turn you from every devotional practice, especially from the veneration of the saints, from devout meditation on My passion, and from your firm purpose of advancing in virtue. He suggests many evil thoughts that he may cause you weariness and horror, and thus draw you away from prayer and holy reading. A humble confession displeases him and, if he could, he would make you omit Holy Communion.

Do not believe him or heed him, even though he often sets traps to deceive you. When he suggests evil, unclean things, accuse him. Say to him: “Away, unclean spirit! Shame, miserable creature! You are but filth to bring such things to my ears. Begone, most wretched seducer! You shall have no part in me, for Jesus will be my strength, and you shall be confounded. I would rather die and suffer all torments than consent to you. Be still! Be silent! Though you bring many troubles upon me I will have none of you. The Lord is my light, my salvation. Whom shall I fear? Though armies unite against me, my heart will not fear, for the Lord is my Helper, my Redeemer.”

Fight like a good soldier and if you sometimes fall through weakness, rise again with greater strength than before, trusting in My most abundant grace. But beware of vain complacency and pride. For many are led into error through these faults and sometimes fall into almost perpetual blindness. Let the fall of these, who proudly presume on self, be a warning to you and a constant incentive to humility.

The Seventh Chapter

Grace Must Be Hidden Under the Mantle of Humility

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

IT IS better and safer for you to conceal the grace of devotion, not to be elated by it, not to speak or think much of it, and instead to humble yourself and fear lest it is being given to one unworthy of it. Do not cling too closely to this affection, for it may quickly be changed to its opposite. When you are in grace, think how miserable and needy you are without it. Your progress in spiritual life does not consist in having the grace of consolation, but in enduring its withdrawal with humility, resignation, and patience, so that you neither become listless in prayer nor neglect your other duties in the least; but on the contrary do what you can do as well as you know how, and do not neglect yourself completely because of your dryness or anxiety of mind.

There are many, indeed, who immediately become impatient and lazy when things do not go well with them. The way of man, however, does not always lie in his own power. It is God's prerogative to give grace and to console when He wishes, as much as He wishes, and whom He wishes, as it shall please Him and no more.

Some careless persons, misusing the grace of devotion, have destroyed themselves because they wished to do more than they were able. They failed to take account of their own weakness, and followed the desire of their heart rather than the judgment of their reason. Then, because they presumed to greater things than pleased God they quickly lost His grace. They who had built their homes in heaven became helpless, vile outcasts, humbled and impoverished, that they might learn not to fly with their own wings but to trust in Mine.

They who are still new and inexperienced in the way of the Lord may easily be deceived and overthrown unless they guide themselves by the advice of discreet persons. But if they wish to follow their own notions rather

than to trust in others who are more experienced, they will be in danger of a sorry end, at least if they are unwilling to be drawn from their vanity. Seldom do they who are wise in their own conceits bear humbly the guidance of others. Yet a little knowledge humbly and meekly pursued is better than great treasures of learning sought in vain complacency. It is better for you to have little than to have much which may become the source of pride.

He who gives himself up entirely to enjoyment acts very unwisely, for he forgets his former helplessness and that chastened fear of the Lord which dreads to lose a proffered grace. Nor is he very brave or wise who becomes too despondent in times of adversity and difficulty and thinks less confidently of Me than he should. He who wishes to be too secure in time of peace will often become too dejected and fearful in time of trial.

If you were wise enough to remain always humble and small in your own eyes, and to restrain and rule your spirit well, you would not fall so quickly into danger and offense.

When a spirit of fervor is enkindled within you, you may well meditate on how you will feel when the fervor leaves. Then, when this happens, remember that the light which I have withdrawn for a time as a warning to you and for My own glory may again return. Such trials are often more beneficial than if you had things always as you wish. For a man's merits are not measured by many visions or consolations, or by knowledge of the Scriptures, or by his being in a higher position than others, but by the truth of his humility, by his capacity for divine charity, by his constancy in seeking purely and entirely the honor of God, by his disregard and positive contempt of self, and more, by preferring to be despised and humiliated rather than honored by others.

The Eighth Chapter

Self-Abasement in the Sight of God

THE DISCIPLE

I WILL speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. If I consider myself anything more than this, behold You stand against me, and my sins bear witness to the truth which I cannot contradict. If I abase myself, however, if I humble myself to nothingness, if I shrink from all self-esteem and account myself as the dust which I am, Your grace will favor me, Your light will enshroud my heart, and all self-esteem, no matter how little, will sink in the depths of my nothingness to perish forever.

It is there You show me to myself—what I am, what I have been, and what I am coming to; for I am nothing and I did not know it. Left to myself, I am nothing but total weakness. But if You look upon me for an instant, I am at once made strong and filled with new joy. Great wonder it is that I, who of my own weight always sink to the depths, am so suddenly lifted up, and so graciously embraced by You.

It is Your love that does this, graciously upholding me, supporting me in so many necessities, guarding me from so many grave dangers, and snatching me, as I may truly say, from evils without number. Indeed, by loving myself badly I lost myself; by seeking only You and by truly loving You I have found both myself and You, and by that love I have reduced myself more profoundly to nothing. For You, O sweetest Lord, deal with me above all my merits and above all that I dare to hope or ask.

May You be blessed, my God, for although I am unworthy of any benefits, yet Your nobility and infinite goodness never cease to do good even for those who are ungrateful and far from You. Convert us to You, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout, for You are our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

The Ninth Chapter

All Things should be Referred to God as their Last End

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, I must be your supreme and last end, if you truly desire to be blessed. With this intention your affections, which are too often perversely inclined to self and to creatures, will be purified. For if you seek yourself in anything, you immediately fail interiorly and become dry of heart.

Refer all things principally to Me, therefore, for it is I Who have given them all. Consider each thing as flowing from the highest good, and therefore to Me, as to their highest source, must all things be brought back.

From Me the small and the great, the poor and the rich draw the water of life as from a living fountain, and they who serve Me willingly and freely shall receive grace upon grace. He who wishes to glory in things apart from Me, however, or to delight in some good as his own, shall not be grounded in true joy or gladdened in his heart, but shall be burdened and distressed in many ways. Hence you ought not to attribute any good to yourself or ascribe virtue to any man, but give all to God without Whom man has nothing.

I have given all things. I will that all be returned to Me again, and I exact most strictly a return of thanks. This is the truth by which vainglory is put to flight.

Where heavenly grace and true charity enter in, there neither envy nor narrowness of heart nor self-love will have place. Divine love conquers all and enlarges the powers of the soul.

If you are truly wise, you will rejoice only in Me, because no one is good except God alone, Who is to be praised above all things and above all to be blessed.

The Tenth Chapter

To Despise the World and Serve God is Sweet

THE DISCIPLE

NOW again I will speak, Lord, and will not be silent. I will speak to the hearing of my God, my Lord, and my King Who is in heaven. How great, O Lord, is the multitude of Your mercies which You have stored up for those who love You. But what are You to those who love You? What are You to those who serve You with their whole heart?

Truly beyond the power of words is the sweetness of contemplation You give to those who love You. To me You have shown the sweetness of Your charity, especially in having made me when I did not exist, in having brought me back to serve You when I had gone far astray from You, in having commanded me to love You.

O Fountain of unceasing love, what shall I say of You? How can I forget You, Who have been pleased to remember me even after I had wasted away and perished? You have shown mercy to Your servant beyond all hope, and have exhibited grace and friendship beyond his deserving.

What return shall I make to You for this grace? For it is not given every man to forsake all things, to renounce the world, and undertake the religious life. Is it anything great that I should serve You Whom every creature is bound to serve? It should not seem much to me; instead it should appear great and wonderful that You condescend to receive into Your service one who is so poor and unworthy. Behold, all things are Yours, even those which I have and by which I serve You. Behold, heaven and earth which You created for the service of man, stand ready, and each day they do whatever You command. But even this is little, for You have appointed angels also to minister to man—yea more than all this—You Yourself have condescended to serve man and have promised to give him Yourself.

What return shall I make for all these thousands of benefits? Would that I

could serve You all the days of my life! Would that for but one day I could serve You worthily! Truly You are worthy of all service, all honor, and everlasting praise. Truly You are my Lord, and I am Your poor servant, bound to serve You with all my powers, praising You without ever becoming weary. I wish to do this—this is my desire. Do You supply whatever is wanting in me.

It is a great honor, a great glory to serve You and to despise all things for Your sake. They who give themselves gladly to Your most holy service will possess great grace. They who cast aside all carnal delights for Your love will find the most sweet consolation of the Holy Ghost. They who enter upon the narrow way for Your name and cast aside all worldly care will attain great freedom of mind.

O sweet and joyful service of God, which makes man truly free and holy! O sacred state of religious bondage which makes man equal to the angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the demons, and worthy of the commendation of all the faithful! O service to be embraced and always desired, in which the highest good is offered and joy is won which shall remain forever!

The Eleventh Chapter

The Longings of our Hearts Must Be Examined And Moderated

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, it is necessary for you to learn many things which you have not yet learned well.

THE DISCIPLE

What are they, Lord?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

That you conform your desires entirely according to My good pleasure, and be not a lover of self but an earnest doer of My will. Desires very often inflame you and drive you madly on, but consider whether you act for My honor, or for your own advantage. If I am the cause, you will be well content with whatever I ordain. If, on the other hand, any self-seeking lurk in you, it troubles you and weighs you down. Take care, then, that you do not rely too much on preconceived desire that has no reference to Me, lest you repent later on and be displeased with what at first pleased you and which you desired as being for the best. Not every desire which seems good should be followed immediately, nor, on the other hand, should every contrary affection be at once rejected.

It is sometimes well to use a little restraint even in good desires and inclinations, lest through too much eagerness you bring upon yourself distraction of mind; lest through your lack of discipline you create scandal for others; or lest you be suddenly upset and fall because of resistance from others. Sometimes, however, you must use violence and resist your sensual appetite bravely. You must pay no attention to what the flesh does or does not desire, taking pains that it be subjected, even by force, to the spirit. And it

should be chastised and forced to remain in subjection until it is prepared for anything and is taught to be satisfied with little, to take pleasure in simple things, and not to murmur against inconveniences.

The Twelfth Chapter

Acquiring Patience in the Fight Against Concupiscence

THE DISCIPLE

PATIENCE, O Lord God, is very necessary for me, I see, because there are many adversities in this life. No matter what plans I make for my own peace, my life cannot be free from struggle and sorrow.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, you are right, yet My wish is not that you seek that peace which is free from temptations or meets with no opposition, but rather that you consider yourself as having found peace when you have been tormented with many tribulations and tried with many adversities.

If you say that you cannot suffer much, how will you endure the fire of purgatory? Of two evils, the lesser is always to be chosen. Therefore, in order that you may escape the everlasting punishments to come, try to bear present evils patiently for the sake of God.

Do you think that men of the world have no suffering, or perhaps but little? Ask even those who enjoy the most delights and you will learn otherwise. "But," you will say, "they enjoy many pleasures and follow their own wishes; therefore they do not feel their troubles very much." Granted that they do have whatever they wish, how long do you think it will last? Behold, they who prosper in the world shall perish as smoke, and there shall be no memory of their past joys. Even in this life they do not find rest in these pleasures without bitterness, weariness, and fear. For they often receive the penalty of sorrow from the very thing whence they believe their happiness comes. And it is just. Since they seek and follow after pleasures without reason, they should not enjoy them without shame and bitterness.

How brief, how false, how unreasonable and shameful all these pleasures are! Yet in their drunken blindness men do not understand this, but like brute

beasts incur death of soul for the miserly enjoyment of a corruptible life.

Therefore, My child, do not pursue your lusts, but turn away from your own will. “Seek thy pleasure in the Lord and He will give thee thy heart’s desires.”³⁴ If you wish to be truly delighted and more abundantly comforted by Me, behold, in contempt of all worldly things and in the cutting off of all base pleasures shall your blessing be, and great consolation shall be given you. Further, the more you withdraw yourself from any solace of creatures, the sweeter and stronger comfort will you find in Me.

At first you will not gain these blessings without sadness and toil and conflict. Habit already formed will resist you, but it shall be overcome by a better habit. The flesh will murmur against you, but it will be bridled by fervor of spirit. The old serpent will sting and trouble you, but prayer will put him to flight and by steadfast, useful toil the way will be closed to him.

The Thirteenth Chapter

The Obedience of One Humbly Subject to the Example of Jesus Christ

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, he who attempts to escape obeying withdraws himself from grace. Likewise he who seeks private benefits for himself loses those which are common to all. He who does not submit himself freely and willingly to his superior, shows that his flesh is not yet perfectly obedient but that it often rebels and murmurs against him.

Learn quickly, then, to submit yourself to your superior if you wish to conquer your own flesh. For the exterior enemy is more quickly overcome if the inner man is not laid waste. There is no more troublesome, no worse enemy of the soul than you yourself, if you are not in harmony with the spirit. It is absolutely necessary that you conceive a true contempt for yourself if you wish to be victorious over flesh and blood.

Because you still love yourself too inordinately, you are afraid to resign yourself wholly to the will of others. Is it such a great matter if you, who are but dust and nothingness, subject yourself to man for the sake of God, when I, the All-Powerful, the Most High, Who created all things out of nothing, humbly subjected Myself to man for your sake? I became the most humble and the lowest of all men that you might overcome your pride with My humility.

Learn to obey, you who are but dust! Learn to humble yourself, you who are but earth and clay, and bow down under the foot of every man! Learn to break your own will, to submit to all subjection! Be zealous against yourself! Allow no pride to dwell in you, but prove yourself so humble and lowly that all may walk over you and trample upon you as dust in the streets!

What have you, vain man, to complain of? What answer can you make, vile sinner, to those who accuse you, you who have so often offended God

and so many times deserved hell? But My eye has spared you because your soul was precious in My sight, so that you might know My love and always be thankful for My benefits, so that you might give yourself continually to true subjection and humility, and might patiently endure contempt.

The Fourteenth Chapter

Consider the Hidden Judgments of God Lest You Become Proud of Your Own Good Deeds

THE DISCIPLE

YOU thunder forth Your judgments over me, Lord. You shake all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is very much afraid. I stand in awe as I consider that the heavens are not pure in Your sight. If You found wickedness in the angels and did not spare them, what will become of me? Stars have fallen from heaven, and I—I who am but dust—how can I be presumptuous? They whose deeds seemed worthy of praise have fallen into the depths, and I have seen those who ate the bread of angels delighting themselves with the husks of swine.

There is no holiness, then, if You withdraw Your hand, Lord. There is no wisdom if You cease to guide, no courage if You cease to defend. No chastity is secure if You do not guard it. Our vigilance avails nothing if Your holy watchfulness does not protect us. Left to ourselves we sink and perish, but visited by You we are lifted up and live. We are truly unstable, but You make us strong. We grow lukewarm, but You inflame us.

Oh, how humbly and lowly should I consider myself! How very little should I esteem anything that seems good in me! How profoundly should I submit to Your unfathomable judgments, Lord, where I find myself to be but nothing!

O immeasurable weight! O impassable sea, where I find myself to be nothing but bare nothingness! Where, then, is glory's hiding place? Where can there be any trust in my own virtue? All vainglory is swallowed up in the depths of Your judgments upon me.

What is all flesh in Your sight? Shall the clay glory against Him that formed it? How can he whose heart is truly subject to God be lifted up by vainglory? The whole world will not make him proud whom truth has

subjected to itself. Nor shall he who has placed all his hope in God be moved by the tongues of flatterers. For behold, even they who speak are nothing; they will pass away with the sound of their words, but the truth of the Lord remains forever.

The Fifteenth Chapter

How One Should Feel and Speak on Every Desirable Thing

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, this is the way you must speak on every occasion: “Lord, if it be pleasing to You, so be it. If it be to Your honor, Lord, be it done in Your name. Lord, if You see that it is expedient and profitable for me, then grant that I may use it to Your honor. But if You know that it will be harmful to me, and of no good benefit to the welfare of my soul, then take this desire away from me.”

Not every desire is from the Holy Spirit, even though it may seem right and good. It is difficult to be certain whether it is a good spirit or a bad one that prompts one to this or that, and even to know whether you are being moved by your own spirit. Many who seemed at first to be led by a good spirit have been deceived in the end.

Whatever the mind sees as good, ask and desire in fear of God and humility of heart. Above all, commit the whole matter to Me with true resignation, and say: “Lord, You know what is better for me; let this be done or that be done as You please. Grant what You will, as much as You will, when You will. Do with me as You know best, as will most please You, and will be for Your greater honor. Place me where You will and deal with me freely in all things. I am in Your hand; turn me about whichever way You will. Behold, I am Your servant, ready to obey in all things. Not for myself do I desire to live, but for You—would that I could do this worthily and perfectly!”

A PRAYER THAT THE WILL OF GOD BE DONE

Grant me Your grace, O most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and work with me, and remain with me to the very end. Grant that I may always desire and will that which is most acceptable and pleasing to You. Let Your

will be mine. Let my will always follow Yours and agree perfectly with it. Let my will be one with Yours in willing and in not willing, and let me be unable to will or not will anything but what You will or do not will. Grant that I may die to all things in this world, and for Your sake love to be despised and unknown in this life. Give me above all desires the desire to rest in You, and in You let my heart have peace. You are true peace of heart. You alone are its rest. Without You all things are difficult and troubled. In this peace, the selfsame that is in You, the Most High, the everlasting Good, I will sleep and take my rest. Amen.

The Sixteenth Chapter

True Comfort Is to Be Sought in God Alone

THE DISCIPLE

WHATEVER I can desire or imagine for my own comfort I look for not here but hereafter. For if I alone should have all the world's comforts and could enjoy all its delights, it is certain that they could not long endure. Therefore, my soul, you cannot enjoy full consolation or perfect delight except in God, the Consoler of the poor and the Helper of the humble. Wait a little, my soul, wait for the divine promise and you will have an abundance of all good things in heaven. If you desire these present things too much, you will lose those which are everlasting and heavenly. Use temporal things but desire eternal things. You cannot be satisfied with any temporal goods because you were not created to enjoy them.

Even if you possessed all created things you could not be happy and blessed; for in God, Who created all these things, your whole blessedness and happiness consists—not indeed such happiness as is seen and praised by lovers of the world, but such as that for which the good and faithful servants of Christ wait, and of which the spiritual and pure of heart, whose conversation is in heaven, sometime have a foretaste.

Vain and brief is all human consolation. But that which is received inwardly from the Truth is blessed and true. The devout man carries his Consoler, Jesus, everywhere with him, and he says to Him: “Be with me, Lord Jesus, in every place and at all times. Let this be my consolation, to be willing to forego all human comforting. And if Your consolation be wanting to me, let Your will and just trial of me be my greatest comfort. For You will not always be angry, nor will You threaten forever.”

The Seventeenth Chapter
All Our Care is to Be Placed in God

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, allow me to do what I will with you. I know what is best for you. You think as a man; you feel in many things as human affection persuades.

THE DISCIPLE

Lord, what You say is true. Your care for me is greater than all the care I can take of myself. For he who does not cast all his care upon You stands very unsafely. If only my will remain right and firm toward You, Lord, do with me whatever pleases You. For whatever You shall do with me can only be good.

If You wish me to be in darkness, I shall bless You. And if You wish me to be in light, again I shall bless You. If You stoop down to comfort me, I shall bless You, and if You wish me to be afflicted, I shall bless You forever.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, this is the disposition which you should have if you wish to walk with Me. You should be as ready to suffer as to enjoy. You should as willingly be destitute and poor as rich and satisfied.

THE DISCIPLE

O Lord, I shall suffer willingly for Your sake whatever You wish to send me. I am ready to accept from Your hand both good and evil alike, the sweet and the bitter together, sorrow with joy; and for all that happens to me I am grateful. Keep me from all sin and I will fear neither death nor hell. Do not cast me out forever nor blot me out of the Book of Life, and whatever tribulation befalls will not harm me.

The Eighteenth Chapter

Temporal Sufferings Should Be Borne Patiently, After the Example of Christ

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, I came down from heaven for your salvation and took upon Myself your miseries, not out of necessity but out of love, that you might learn to be patient and bear the sufferings of this life without repining. From the moment of My birth to My death on the cross, suffering did not leave Me. I suffered great want of temporal goods. Often I heard many complaints against Me. Disgrace and reviling I bore with patience. For My blessings I received ingratitude, for My miracles blasphemies, and for My teaching scorn.

THE DISCIPLE

O Lord, because You were patient in life, especially in fulfilling the design of the Father, it is fitting that I, a most miserable sinner, should live patiently according to Your will, and, as long as You shall wish, bear the burden of this corruptible body for the welfare of my soul. For though this present life seems burdensome, yet by Your grace it becomes meritorious, and it is made brighter and more endurable for the weak by Your example and the pathways of the saints. But it has also more consolation than formerly under the old law when the gates of heaven were closed, when the way thereto seemed darker than now, and when so few cared to seek the eternal kingdom. The just, the elect, could not enter heaven before Your sufferings and sacred death had paid the debt.

Oh, what great thanks I owe You, Who have shown me and all the faithful the good and right way to Your everlasting kingdom! Your life is our way and in Your holy patience we come nearer to You Who are our crown. Had

You not gone before and taught us, who would have cared to follow? Alas, how many would have remained far behind, had they not before their eyes Your holy example! Behold, even we who have heard of Your many miracles and teachings are still lukewarm; what would happen if we did not have such light by which to follow You?

The Nineteenth Chapter

True Patience in Suffering

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

WHAT are you saying, My child? Think of My suffering and that of the saints, and cease complaining. You have not yet resisted to the shedding of blood. What you suffer is very little compared with the great things they suffered who were so strongly tempted, so severely troubled, so tried and tormented in many ways. Well may you remember, therefore, the very painful woes of others, that you may bear your own little ones the more easily. And if they do not seem so small to you, examine if perhaps your impatience is not the cause of their apparent greatness; and whether they are great or small, try to bear them all patiently. The better you dispose yourself to suffer, the more wisely you act and the greater is the reward promised you. Thus you will suffer more easily if your mind and habits are diligently trained to it.

Do not say: “I cannot bear this from such a man, nor should I suffer things of this kind, for he has done me a great wrong. He has accused me of many things of which I never thought. However, from someone else I will gladly suffer as much as I think I should.”

Such a thought is foolish, for it does not consider the virtue of patience or the One Who will reward it, but rather weighs the person and the offense committed. The man who will suffer only as much as seems good to him, who will accept suffering only from those from whom he is pleased to accept it, is not truly patient. For the truly patient man does not consider from whom the suffering comes, whether from a superior, an equal, or an inferior, whether from a good and holy person or from a perverse and unworthy one; but no matter how great an adversity befalls him, no matter how often it comes or from whom it comes, he accepts it gratefully from the hand of God, and counts it a great gain. For with God nothing that is suffered for His sake,

no matter how small, can pass without reward. Be prepared for the fight, then, if you wish to gain the victory. Without struggle you cannot obtain the crown of patience, and if you refuse to suffer you are refusing the crown. But if you desire to be crowned, fight bravely and bear up patiently. Without labor there is no rest, and without fighting, no victory.

THE DISCIPLE

O Lord, let that which seems naturally impossible to me become possible through Your grace. You know that I can suffer very little, and that I am quickly discouraged when any small adversity arises. Let the torment of tribulation suffered for Your name be pleasant and desirable to me, since to suffer and be troubled for Your sake is very beneficial for my soul.

The Twentieth Chapter

Confessing Our Weakness in the Miseries of Life

THE DISCIPLE

I WILL bring witness against myself to my injustice, and to You, O Lord, I will confess my weakness.

Often it is a small thing that makes me downcast and sad. I propose to act bravely, but when even a small temptation comes I find myself in great straits. Sometimes it is the merest trifle which gives rise to grievous temptations. When I think myself somewhat safe and when I am not expecting it, I frequently find myself almost overcome by a slight wind. Look, therefore, Lord, at my lowliness and frailty which You know so well. Have mercy on me and snatch me out of the mire that I may not be caught in it and may not remain forever utterly despondent.

That I am so prone to fall and so weak in resisting my passions oppresses me frequently and confounds me in Your sight. While I do not fully consent to them, still their assault is very troublesome and grievous to me, and it wearies me exceedingly thus to live in daily strife. Yet from the fact that abominable fancies rush in upon me much more easily than they leave, my weakness becomes clear to me.

Oh that You, most mighty God of Israel, zealous Lover of faithful souls, would consider the labor and sorrow of Your servant, and assist him in all his undertakings! Strengthen me with heavenly courage lest the outer man, the miserable flesh, against which I shall be obliged to fight so long as I draw a breath in this wretched life and which is not yet subjected to the spirit, prevail and dominate me.

Alas! What sort of life is this, from which troubles and miseries are never absent, where all things are full of snares and enemies? For when one trouble or temptation leaves, another comes. Indeed, even while the first conflict is still raging, many others begin unexpectedly. How is it possible to love a life

that has such great bitterness, that is subject to so many calamities and miseries? Indeed, how can it even be called life when it begets so many deaths and plagues? And yet, it is loved, and many seek their delight in it.

Many persons often blame the world for being false and vain, yet do not readily give it up because the desires of the flesh have such great power. Some things draw them to love the world, others make them despise it. The lust of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life lead to love, while the pains and miseries, which are the just consequences of those things, beget hatred and weariness of the world.

Vicious pleasure overcomes the soul that is given to the world. She thinks that there are delights beneath these thorns, because she has never seen or tasted the sweetness of God or the internal delight of virtue. They, on the other hand, who entirely despise the world and seek to live for God under the rule of holy discipline, are not ignorant of the divine sweetness promised to those who truly renounce the world. They see clearly how gravely the world errs, and in how many ways it deceives.

The Twenty-first Chapter

Above All Goods and All Gifts We Must Rest in God

THE DISCIPLE

ABOVE all things and in all things, O my soul, rest always in God, for He is the everlasting rest of the saints.

Grant, most sweet and loving Jesus, that I may seek my repose in You above every creature; above all health and beauty; above every honor and glory; every power and dignity; above all knowledge and cleverness, all riches and arts, all joy and gladness; above all fame and praise, all sweetness and consolation; above every hope and promise, every merit and desire; above all the gifts and favors that You can give or pour down upon me; above all the joy and exultation that the mind can receive and feel; and finally, above the angels and archangels and all the heavenly host; above all things visible and invisible; and may I seek my repose in You above everything that is not You, my God.

For You, O Lord my God, are above all things the best. You alone are most high, You alone most powerful. You alone are most sufficient and most satisfying, You alone most sweet and consoling. You alone are most beautiful and loving, You alone most noble and glorious above all things. In You is every perfection that has been or ever will be. Therefore, whatever You give me besides Yourself, whatever You reveal to me concerning Yourself, and whatever You promise, is too small and insufficient when I do not see and fully enjoy You alone. For my heart cannot rest or be fully content until, rising above all gifts and every created thing, it rests in You.³⁵

Who, O most beloved Spouse, Jesus Christ, most pure Lover, Lord of all creation, who shall give me the wings of true liberty that I may fly to rest in You? When shall freedom be fully given me to see how sweet You are, O Lord, my God? When shall I recollect myself entirely in You, so that because of Your love I may feel, not myself, but You alone above all sense and

measure, in a manner known to none? But now I often lament and grieve over my unhappiness, for many evils befall me in this vale of miseries, often disturbing me, making me sad and overshadowing me, often hindering and distracting me, alluring and entangling me so that I neither have free access to You nor enjoy the sweet embraces which are ever ready for blessed souls. Let my sighs and the manifold desolation here on earth move You.

O Jesus, Splendor of eternal glory, Consolation of the pilgrim soul, with You my lips utter no sound and to You my silence speaks. How long will my Lord delay His coming? Let Him come to His poor servant and make him happy. Let Him put forth His hand and take this miserable creature from his anguish. Come, O come, for without You there will be no happy day or hour, because You are my happiness and without You my table is empty. I am wretched, as it were imprisoned and weighted down with fetters, until You fill me with the light of Your presence, restore me to liberty, and show me a friendly countenance. Let others seek instead of You whatever they will, but nothing pleases me or will please me but You, my God, my Hope, my everlasting Salvation. I will not be silent, I will not cease praying until Your grace returns to me and You speak inwardly to me, saying: "Behold, I am here. Lo, I have come to you because you have called Me. Your tears and the desire of your soul, your humility and contrition of heart have inclined Me and brought Me to you."

Lord, I have called You, and have desired You, and have been ready to spurn all things for Your sake. For You first spurred me on to seek You. May You be blessed, therefore, O Lord, for having shown this goodness to Your servant according to the multitude of Your mercies.

What more is there for Your servant to say to You unless, with his iniquity and vileness always in mind, he humbles himself before You? Nothing among all the wonders of heaven and earth is like to You. Your works are exceedingly good, Your judgments true, and Your providence rules the whole universe. May You be praised and glorified, therefore, O Wisdom of the Father. Let my lips and my soul and all created things unite to praise and bless You.

The Twenty-Second Chapter
Remember the Innumerable Gifts of God

THE DISCIPLE

OPEN my heart, O Lord, to Your law and teach me to walk in the way of Your commandments. Let me understand Your will. Let me remember Your blessings—all of them and each single one of them—with great reverence and care so that henceforth I may return worthy thanks for them. I know that I am unable to give due thanks for even the least of Your gifts. I am unworthy of the benefits You have given me, and when I consider Your generosity my spirit faints away before its greatness. All that we have of soul and body, whatever we possess interiorly or exteriorly, by nature or by grace, are Your gifts and they proclaim Your goodness and mercy from which we have received all good things.

If one receives more and another less, yet all are Yours and without You nothing can be received. He who receives greater things cannot glory in his own merit or consider himself above others or behave insolently toward those who receive less. He who attributes less to himself and is the more humble and devout in returning thanks is indeed the greater and the better, while he who considers himself lower than all men and judges himself to be the least worthy, is the more fit to receive the greater blessing.

He, on the other hand, who has received fewer gifts should not be sad or impatient or envious of the richer man. Instead he should turn his mind to You and offer You the greatest praise because You give so bountifully, so freely and willingly, without regard to persons. All things come from You; therefore, You are to be praised in all things. You know what is good for each of us; and why one should receive less and another more is not for us to judge, but for You Who have marked every man's merits.

Therefore, O Lord God, I consider it a great blessing not to have many things which human judgment holds praiseworthy and glorious, for one who

realizes his own poverty and vileness should not be sad or downcast at it, but rather consoled and happy because You, O God, have chosen the poor, the humble, and the despised in this world to be Your friends and servants. The truth of this is witnessed by Your Apostles, whom You made princes over all the world. Yet they lived in this world without complaining, so humble and simple, so free from malice and deceit, that they were happy even to suffer reproach for Your name and to embrace with great affection that which the world abhors.

A man who loves You and recognizes Your benefits, therefore, should be gladdened by nothing so much as by Your will, by the good pleasure of Your eternal decree. With this he should be so contented and consoled that he would wish to be the least as others wish to be the greatest; that he would be as peaceful and satisfied in the last place as in the first, and as willing to be despised, unknown and forgotten, as to be honored by others and to have more fame than they. He should prefer Your will and the love of Your honor to all else, and it should comfort him more than all the benefits which have been, or will be, given him.

The Twenty-Third Chapter

Four Things Which Bring Great Peace

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, I will teach you now the way of peace and true liberty.

Seek, child, to do the will of others rather than your own.
Always choose to have less rather than more.
Look always for the last place and seek to be beneath all others.
Always wish and pray that the will of God be fully carried out in you.
Behold, such will enter into the realm of peace and rest.

THE DISCIPLE

O Lord, this brief discourse of Yours contains much perfection. It is short in words but full of meaning and abounding in fruit. Certainly if I could only keep it faithfully, I should not be so easily disturbed. For as often as I find myself troubled and dejected, I find that I have departed from this teaching. But You Who can do all things, and Who always love what is for my soul's welfare, give me increase of grace that I may keep Your words and accomplish my salvation.

A PRAYER AGAINST BAD THOUGHTS

O Lord my God, be not far from me. O my God, hasten to help me, for varied thoughts and great fears have risen up within me, afflicting my soul. How shall I escape them unharmed? How shall I dispel them?

“I will go before you,” says the Lord, “and will humble the great ones of earth. I will open the doors of the prison, and will reveal to you hidden secrets.”

Do as You say, Lord, and let all evil thoughts fly from Your face. This is my hope and my only comfort—to fly to You in all tribulation, to confide in You, and to call on You from the depths of my heart and to await patiently

for Your consolation.

A PRAYER FOR ENLIGHTENING THE MIND

Enlighten me, good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and take away all darkness from the habitation of my heart. Restrain my wandering thoughts and suppress the temptations which attack me so violently. Fight strongly for me, and vanquish these evil beasts—the alluring desires of the flesh—so that peace may come through Your power and the fullness of Your praise resound in the holy courts, which is a pure conscience. Command the winds and the tempests; say to the sea: “Be still,” and to the north wind, “Do not blow,” and there will be a great calm.

Send forth Your light and Your truth to shine on the earth, for I am as earth, empty and formless until You illumine me. Pour out Your grace from above. Shower my heart with heavenly dew. Open the springs of devotion to water the earth, that it may produce the best of good fruits. Lift up my heart pressed down by the weight of sins, and direct all my desires to heavenly things, that having tasted the sweetness of supernal happiness, I may find no pleasure in thinking of earthly things.

Snatch me up and deliver me from all the passing comfort of creatures, for no created thing can fully quiet and satisfy my desires. Join me to Yourself in an inseparable bond of love; because You alone can satisfy him who loves You, and without You all things are worthless.

The Twenty-Fourth Chapter

Avoiding Curious Inquiry About the Lives of Others

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, do not be curious. Do not trouble yourself with idle cares. What matters this or that to you? Follow Me. What is it to you if a man is such and such, if another does or says this or that? You will not have to answer for others, but you will have to give an account of yourself. Why, then, do you meddle in their affairs?

Behold, I know all men. I see everything that is done under the sun, and I know how matters stand with each—what is in his mind and what in his heart and the end to which his intention is directed. Commit all things to Me, therefore, and keep yourself in good peace. Let him who is disturbed be as restless as he will. Whatever he has said or done will fall upon himself, for he cannot deceive Me.

Do not be anxious for the shadow of a great name, for the close friendship of many, or for the particular affection of men. These things cause distraction and cast great darkness about the heart. I would willingly speak My word and reveal My secrets to you, if you would watch diligently for My coming and open your heart to Me. Be prudent, then. Watch in prayer, and in all things humble yourself.

The Twenty-Fifth Chapter

The Basis of Firm Peace of Heart and True Progress

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, I have said: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.”³⁶

All men desire peace but all do not care for the things that go to make true peace. My peace is with the humble and meek of heart: your peace will be in much patience. If you hear Me and follow My voice, you will be able to enjoy much peace.

THE DISCIPLE

What, then, shall I do, Lord?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Watch yourself in all things, in what you do and what you say. Direct your every intention toward pleasing Me alone, and desire nothing outside of Me. Do not be rash in judging the deeds and words of others, and do not entangle yourself in affairs that are not your own. Thus, it will come about that you will be disturbed little and seldom.

Yet, never to experience any disturbance or to suffer any hurt in heart or body does not belong to this present life, but rather to the state of eternal rest. Do not think, therefore, that you have found true peace if you feel no depression, or that all is well because you suffer no opposition. Do not think that all is perfect if everything happens just as you wish. And do not imagine yourself great or consider yourself especially beloved if you are filled with great devotion and sweetness. For the true lover of virtue is not known by these things, nor do the progress and perfection of a man consist in them.

THE DISCIPLE

In what do they consist, Lord?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

They consist in offering yourself with all your heart to the divine will, not seeking what is yours either in small matters or great ones, either in temporal or eternal things, so that you will preserve equanimity and give thanks in both prosperity and adversity, seeing all things in their proper light.

If you become so brave and long-suffering in hope that you can prepare your heart to suffer still more even when all inward consolation is withdrawn, and if you do not justify yourself as though you ought not be made to suffer such great things, but acknowledge Me to be just in all My works and praise My holy name—then you will walk in the true and right path of peace, then you may have sure hope of seeing My face again in joy. If you attain to complete contempt of self, then know that you will enjoy an abundance of peace, as much as is possible in this earthly life.

The Twenty-Sixth Chapter

The Excellence of a Free Mind, Gained Through Prayer Rather Than By Study

THE DISCIPLE

IT IS the mark of a perfect man, Lord, never to let his mind relax in attention to heavenly things, and to pass through many cares as though he had none; not as an indolent man does, but having by the certain prerogative of a free mind no disorderly affection for any created being.

Keep me, I beg You, most merciful God, from the cares of this life, lest I be too much entangled in them. Keep me from many necessities of the body, lest I be ensnared by pleasure. Keep me from all darkness of mind, lest I be broken by troubles and overcome. I do not ask deliverance from those things which worldly vanity desires so eagerly, but from those miseries which, by the common curse of humankind, oppress the soul of Your servant in punishment and keep him from entering into the liberty of spirit as often as he would.

My God, Sweetness beyond words, make bitter all the carnal comfort that draws me from love of the eternal and lures me to its evil self by the sight of some delightful good in the present. Let it not overcome me, my God. Let not flesh and blood conquer me. Let not the world and its brief glory deceive me, nor the devil trip me by his craftiness. Give me courage to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere. Give me the soothing unction of Your spirit rather than all the consolations of the world, and in place of carnal love, infuse into me the love of Your name.

Behold, eating, drinking, clothing, and other necessities that sustain the body are burdensome to the fervent soul. Grant me the grace to use such comforts temperately and not to become entangled in too great a desire for them. It is not lawful to cast them aside completely, for nature must be sustained, but Your holy law forbids us to demand superfluous things and

things that are simply for pleasure, else the flesh would rebel against the spirit. In these matters, I beg, let Your hand guide and direct me, so that I may not overstep the law in any way.

The Twenty-Seventh Chapter

Self-Love is the Greatest Hindrance to the Highest Good

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, you should give all for all, and in no way belong to yourself. You must know that self-love is more harmful to you than anything else in the world. In proportion to the love and affection you have for a thing, it will cling to you more or less. If your love is pure, simple, and well ordered, you will not be a slave to anything. Do not covet what you may not have. Do not possess anything that can hinder you or rob you of freedom.

It is strange that you do not commit yourself to Me with your whole heart, together with all that you can desire or possess. Why are you consumed with foolish sorrow? Why are you wearied with unnecessary care? Be resigned to My will and you will suffer no loss.

If you seek this or that, if you wish to be in this place or that place, to have more ease and pleasure, you will never rest or be free from care, for some defect is found in everything and everywhere someone will vex you. To obtain and multiply earthly goods, then, will not help you, but to despise them and root them out of your heart will aid. This, understand, is true not only of money and wealth, but also of ambition for honor and desire for empty praise, all of which will pass away with this world.

The place matters little if the spirit of fervor is not there; nor will peace be lasting if it is sought from the outside; if your heart has no true foundation, that is, if you are not founded in Me, you may change, but you will not better yourself. For when occasion arises and is accepted, you will find that from which you fled and worse.

A PRAYER FOR CLEANSING THE HEART AND OBTAINING HEAVENLY WISDOM

Strengthen me by the grace of Your holy spirit, O God. Give me the power to be strengthened inwardly and to empty my heart of all vain care and anxiety,

so that I may not be drawn away by many desires, whether for precious things or mean ones. Let me look upon everything as passing, and upon myself as soon to pass away with them, because there is nothing lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit. How wise is he who thinks thus!

Give me, Lord, heavenly wisdom to learn above all else to seek and find You, to enjoy and love You more than anything, and to consider other things as they are, as Your wisdom has ordered them. Grant me prudence to avoid the flatterer and to bear patiently with him who disagrees with me. For it is great wisdom not to be moved by the sound of words, nor to give ear to the wicked, flattering siren. Then, I shall walk safely in the way I have begun.

The Twenty-Eighth Chapter

Strength Against Slander

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, do not take it to heart if some people think badly of you and say unpleasant things about you. You ought to think worse things of yourself and to believe that no one is weaker than yourself. Moreover, if you walk in the spirit you will pay little heed to fleeting words. It is no small prudence to remain silent in evil times, to turn inwardly to Me, and not to be disturbed by human opinions. Do not let your peace depend on the words of men. Their thinking well or badly of you does not make you different from what you are. Where are true peace and glory? Are they not in Me? He who neither cares to please men nor fears to displease them will enjoy great peace, for all unrest and distraction of the senses arise out of disorderly love and vain fear.

The Twenty-Ninth Chapter

How We Must Call Upon and Bless the Lord When Trouble Presses

THE DISCIPLE

BLESSED be Your name forever, O Lord, Who have willed that this temptation and trouble come upon me. I cannot escape it, yet I must fly to You that You may help me and turn it to my good. Now I am troubled, Lord, and my heart is not at rest, for I am greatly afflicted by this present suffering.

Beloved Father, what shall I say? I am straitened in harsh ways. Save me from this hour to which, however, I am come that You may be glorified when I am deeply humbled and freed by You. May it please You, then, to deliver me, Lord, for what can I, poor wretch that I am, do or where can I go without You? Give me patience, Lord, even now. Help me, my God, and I will not be afraid however much I may be distressed.

But here, in the midst of these troubles, what shall I say? Your will be done, Lord. I have richly deserved to be troubled and distressed. But I must bear it. Would that I could do so patiently, until the storm passes and calm returns! Yet Your almighty hand can take this temptation from me, or lighten its attack so that I do not altogether sink beneath it, as You, my God, my Mercy, have very often done for me before. And the more difficult my plight, the easier for You is this change of the right hand of the Most High.

The Thirtieth Chapter

The Quest of Divine Help and Confidence in Regaining Grace

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, I am the Lord Who gives strength in the day of trouble. Come to Me when all is not well with you. Your tardiness in turning to prayer is the greatest obstacle to heavenly consolation, for before you pray earnestly to Me you first seek many comforts and take pleasure in outward things. Thus, all things are of little profit to you until you realize that I am the one Who saves those who trust in Me, and that outside of Me there is no worth-while help, or any useful counsel or lasting remedy.

But now, after the tempest, take courage, grow strong once more in the light of My mercies; for I am near, says the Lord, to restore all things not only to the full but with abundance and above measure. Is anything difficult for Me? Or shall I be as one who promises and does not act? Where is your faith? Stand firm and persevere. Be a man of endurance and courage, and consolation will come to you in due time. Wait for Me; wait—and I will come to heal you.

It is only a temptation that troubles you, a vain fear that terrifies you.

Of what use is anxiety about the future? Does it bring you anything but trouble upon trouble? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. It is foolish and useless to be either grieved or happy about future things which perhaps may never happen. But it is human to be deluded by such imaginations, and the sign of a weak soul to be led on by suggestions of the enemy. For he does not care whether he overcomes you by love of the present or fear of the future.

Let not your heart be troubled, therefore, nor let it be afraid. Believe in Me and trust in My mercy. When you think you are far from Me, then often I am very near you. When you judge that almost all is lost, then very often you are in the way of gaining great merit.

All is not lost when things go contrary to your wishes. You ought not judge according to present feelings, nor give in to any trouble whenever it comes, or take it as though all hope of escape were lost. And do not consider yourself forsaken if I send some temporary hardship, or withdraw the consolation you desire. For this is the way to the kingdom of heaven, and without doubt it is better for you and the rest of My servants to be tried in adversities than to have all things as you wish. I know your secret thoughts, and I know that it is profitable for your salvation to be left sometimes in despondency lest perhaps you be puffed up by success and fancy yourself to be what you are not.

What I have given, I can take away and restore when it pleases Me. What I give remains Mine, and thus when I take it away I take nothing that is yours, for every good gift and every perfect gift is Mine.

If I send you trouble and adversity, do not fret or let your heart be downcast. I can raise you quickly up again and turn all your sorrow into joy. I am no less just and worthy of great praise when I deal with you in this way.

If you think aright and view things in their true light, you should never be so dejected and saddened by adversity, but rather rejoice and give thanks, considering it a matter of special joy that I afflict you with sorrow and do not spare you. "As the Father hath loved Me, so also I love you," I said to My disciples, and I certainly did not send them out to temporal joys but rather to great struggles, not to honors but to contempt, not to idleness, but to labors, not to rest but to bring forth much fruit in patience. Do you, My child, remember these words.

The Thirty-First Chapter

To Find the Creator, Forsake All Creatures

THE DISCIPLE

O LORD, I am in sore need still of greater grace if I am to arrive at the point where no man and no created thing can be an obstacle to me. For as long as anything holds me back, I cannot freely fly to You. He that said “Oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!”³⁷ desired to fly freely to You. Who is more at rest than he who aims at nothing but God? And who more free than the man who desires nothing on earth?

It is well, then, to pass over all creation, perfectly to abandon self, and to see in ecstasy of mind that You, the Creator of all, have no likeness among all Your creatures, and that unless a man be freed from all creatures, he cannot attend freely to the Divine. The reason why so few contemplative persons are found, is that so few know how to separate themselves entirely from what is transitory and created.

For this, indeed, great grace is needed, grace that will raise the soul and lift it up above itself. Unless a man be elevated in spirit, free from all creatures, and completely united to God, all his knowledge and possessions are of little moment. He who considers anything great except the one, immense, eternal good will long be little and lie groveling on the earth. Whatever is not God is nothing and must be accounted as nothing.

There is great difference between the wisdom of an enlightened and devout man and the learning of a well-read and brilliant scholar, for the knowledge which flows down from divine sources is much nobler than that laboriously acquired by human industry.

Many there are who desire contemplation, but who do not care to do the things which contemplation requires. It is also a great obstacle to be satisfied with externals and sensible things, and to have so little of perfect mortification. I know not what it is, or by what spirit we are led, or to what

we pretend—we who wish to be called spiritual—that we spend so much labor and even more anxiety on things that are transitory and mean, while we seldom or never advert with full consciousness to our interior concerns.

Alas, after very little recollection we falter, not weighing our deeds by strict examination. We pay no attention to where our affections lie, nor do we deplore the fact that our actions are impure.

Remember that because all flesh had corrupted its course, the great deluge followed. Since, then, our interior affection is corrupt, it must be that the action which follows from it, the index as it were of our lack of inward strength, is also corrupt. Out of a pure heart come the fruits of a good life.

People are wont to ask how much a man has done, but they think little of the virtue with which he acts. They ask: Is he strong? rich? handsome? a good writer? a good singer? or a good worker? They say little, however, about how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and spiritual. Nature looks to his outward appearance; grace turns to his inward being. The one often errs, the other trusts in God and is not deceived.

The Thirty-Second Chapter

Self-Denial and the Renunciation of Evil Appetites

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, you can never be perfectly free unless you completely renounce self, for all who seek their own interest and who love themselves are bound in fetters. They are unsettled by covetousness and curiosity, always searching for ease and not for the things of Christ, often devising and framing that which will not last, for anything that is not of God will fail completely.

Hold to this short and perfect advice, therefore: give up your desires and you will find rest. Think upon it in your heart, and when you have put it into practice you will understand all things.

THE DISCIPLE

But this, Lord, is not the work of one day, nor is it mere child's play; indeed, in this brief sentence is included all the perfection of holy persons.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, you should not turn away or be downcast when you hear the way of the perfect. Rather you ought to be spurred on the more toward their sublime heights, or at least be moved to seek perfection.

I would this were the case with you—that you had progressed to the point where you no longer loved self but simply awaited My bidding and his whom I have placed as father over you. Then you would please Me very much, and your whole life would pass in peace and joy. But you have yet many things which you must give up, and unless you resign them entirely to Me you will not obtain that which you ask.

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold, fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich”³⁸—rich in heavenly wisdom which treads underfoot all that is low. Put

aside earthly wisdom, all human self-complacency.

I have said: exchange what is precious and valued among men for that which is considered contemptible. For true heavenly wisdom—not to think highly of self and not to seek glory on earth—does indeed seem mean and small and is well-nigh forgotten, as many men praise it with their mouths but shy far away from it in their lives. Yet this heavenly wisdom is a pearl of great price, which is hidden from many.

The Thirty-Third Chapter

Restlessness of Soul—Directing Our Final Intention Toward God

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, do not trust in your present feeling, for it will soon give way to another. As long as you live you will be subject to changeableness in spite of yourself. You will become merry at one time and sad at another, now peaceful but again disturbed, at one moment devout and the next indevout, sometimes diligent while at other times lazy, now grave and again flippant.

But the man who is wise and whose spirit is well instructed stands superior to these changes. He pays no attention to what he feels in himself or from what quarter the wind of fickleness blows, so long as the whole intention of his mind is conducive to his proper and desired end. For thus he can stand undivided, unchanged, and unshaken, with the singleness of his intention directed unwaveringly toward Me, even in the midst of so many changing events. And the purer this singleness of intention is, with so much the more constancy does he pass through many storms.

But in many ways the eye of pure intention grows dim, because it is attracted to any delightful thing that it meets. Indeed, it is rare to find one who is entirely free from all taint of self-seeking. The Jews of old, for example, came to Bethany to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus' sake alone, but in order to see Lazarus.

The eye of your intention, therefore, must be cleansed so that it is single and right. It must be directed toward Me, despite all the objects which may interfere.

The Thirty-Fourth Chapter

God is Sweet Above All Things and in All Things to Those Who Love Him

THE DISCIPLE

BEHOLD, my God and my all! What more do I wish for; what greater happiness can I desire? O sweet and delicious word! But sweet only to him who loves it, and not to the world or the things that are in the world.

My God and my all! These words are enough for him who understands, and for him who loves it is a joy to repeat them often. For when You are present, all things are delightful; when You are absent, all things become loathsome. It is You Who give a heart tranquillity, great peace and festive joy. It is You Who make us think well of all things, and praise You in all things. Without You nothing can give pleasure for very long, for if it is to be pleasing and tasteful, Your grace and the seasoning of Your wisdom must be in it. What is there that can displease him whose happiness is in You? And, on the contrary, what can satisfy him whose delight is not in You?

The wise men of the world, the men who lust for the flesh, are wanting in Your wisdom, because in the world is found the utmost vanity, and in the flesh is death. But they who follow You by disdaining worldly things and mortifying the flesh are known to be truly wise, for they are transported from vanity to truth, from flesh to spirit. By such as these God is relished, and whatever good is found in creatures they turn to praise of the Creator. But great—yes, very great, indeed—is the difference between delight in the Creator and in the creature, in eternity and in time, in Light uncreated and in the light that is reflected.

O Light eternal, surpassing all created brightness, flash forth the lightning from above and enlighten the inmost recesses of my heart. Cleanse, cheer, enlighten, and vivify my spirit with all its powers, that it may cleave to You in ecstasies of joy. Oh, when will that happy and wished-for hour come, that

You may fill me with Your presence and become all in all to me? So long as this is not given me, my joy will not be complete.

The old man, alas, yet lives within me. He has not yet been entirely crucified; he is not yet entirely dead. He still lusts strongly against the spirit, and he will not leave the kingdom of my soul in peace. But You, Who can command the power of the sea and calm the tumult of its waves, arise and help me. Scatter the nations that delight in war; crush them in Your sight. Show forth I beg, Your wonderful works and let Your right hand be glorified, because for me there is no other hope or refuge except in You, O Lord, my God.

The Thirty-Fifth Chapter

There is No Security from Temptation in This Life

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, in this life you are never safe, and as long as you live the weapons of the spirit will ever be necessary to you. You dwell among enemies. You are subject to attack from the right and the left. If, therefore, you do not guard yourself from every quarter with the shield of patience, you will not remain long unscathed.

Moreover, if you do not steadily set your heart on Me, with a firm will to suffer everything for My sake, you will not be able to bear the heat of this battle or to win the crown of the blessed. You ought, therefore, to pass through all these things bravely and to oppose a strong hand to whatever stands in your way. For to him who triumphs heavenly bread is given, while for him who is too lazy to fight there remains much misery.

If you look for rest in this life, how will you attain to everlasting rest? Dispose yourself, then, not for much rest but for great patience. Seek true peace, not on earth but in heaven; not in men or in other creatures but in God alone. For love of God you should undergo all things cheerfully, all labors and sorrows, temptations and trials, anxieties, weaknesses, necessities, injuries, slanders, rebukes, humiliations, confusions, corrections, and contempt. For these are helps to virtue. These are the trials of Christ's recruit. These form the heavenly crown. For a little brief labor I will give an everlasting crown, and for passing confusion, glory that is eternal.

Do you think that you will always have spiritual consolations as you desire? My saints did not always have them. Instead, they had many afflictions, temptations of various kinds, and great desolation. Yet they bore them all patiently. They placed their confidence in God rather than in themselves, knowing that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come. And you—do you wish to have at

once that which others have scarcely obtained after many tears and great labors?

Wait for the Lord, act bravely, and have courage. Do not lose trust. Do not turn back but devote your body and soul constantly to God's glory. I will reward you most plentifully. I will be with you in every tribulation.

The Thirty-Sixth Chapter

The Vain Judgments of Men

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, trust firmly in the Lord, and do not fear the judgment of men when conscience tells you that you are upright and innocent. For it is good and blessed to suffer such things, and they will not weigh heavily on the humble heart that trusts in God rather than in itself. Many men say many things, and therefore little faith is to be put in them.

Likewise, it is impossible to satisfy all men. Although Paul tried to please all in the Lord, and became all things to all men, yet he made little of their opinions. He labored abundantly for the edification and salvation of others, as much as lay in him and as much as he could, but he could not escape being sometimes judged and despised by others. Therefore, he committed all to God Who knows all things, and defended himself by his patience and humility against the tongues of those who spoke unjustly or thought foolish things and lies, or made accusations against him. Sometimes, indeed, he did answer them, but only lest his silence scandalize the weak.

Who are you, then, that you should be afraid of mortal man? Today he is here, tomorrow he is not seen. Fear God and you will not be afraid of the terrors of men. What can anyone do to you by word or injury? He hurts himself rather than you, and no matter who he may be he cannot escape the judgment of God. Keep God before your eyes, therefore, and do not quarrel with peevish words.

If it seems, then, that you are worsted and that you suffer undeserved shame, do not repine over it and do not lessen your crown by impatience. Look instead to heaven, to Me, Who have power to deliver you from all disgrace and injury, and to render to everyone according to his works.

The Thirty-Seventh Chapter

Pure and Entire Resignation of Self to Obtain Freedom of Heart

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, renounce self and you shall find Me. Give up your own self-will, your possessions, and you shall always gain. For once you resign yourself irrevocably, greater grace will be given you.

THE DISCIPLE

How often, Lord, shall I resign myself? And in what shall I forsake myself?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Always, at every hour, in small matters as well as great—I except nothing. In all things I wish you to be stripped of self. How otherwise can you be mine or I yours unless you be despoiled of your own will both inwardly and outwardly? The sooner you do this the better it will be for you, and the more fully and sincerely you do it the more you will please Me and the greater gain you will merit.

Some there are who resign themselves, but with certain reservation; they do not trust fully in God and therefore they try to provide for themselves. Others, again, at first offer all, but afterward are assailed by temptation and return to what they have renounced, thereby making no progress in virtue. These will not reach the true liberty of a pure heart nor the grace of happy friendship with Me unless they first make a full resignation and a daily sacrifice of themselves. Without this no fruitful union lasts nor will last.

I have said to you very often, and now I say again: forsake yourself, renounce yourself and you shall enjoy great inward peace. Give all for all. Ask nothing, demand nothing in return. Trust purely and without hesitation in

Me, and you shall possess Me. You will be free of heart and darkness will not overwhelm you.

Strive for this, pray for this, desire this—to be stripped of all selfishness and naked to follow the naked Jesus, to die to self and live forever for Me. Then all vain imaginations, all wicked disturbances and superfluous cares will vanish. Then also immoderate fear will leave you and inordinate love will die.

The Thirty-Eighth Chapter

The Right Ordering of External Affairs; Recourse to God in Dangers

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, you must strive diligently to be inwardly free, to have mastery over yourself everywhere, in every external act and occupation, that all things be subject to you and not you to them, that you be the master and director of your actions, not a slave or a mere hired servant. You should be rather a free man and a true Hebrew, arising to the status and freedom of the children of God who stand above present things to contemplate those which are eternal; who look upon passing affairs with the left eye and upon those of heaven with the right; whom temporal things do not so attract that they cling to them, but who rather put these things to such proper service as is ordained and instituted by God, the great Workmaster, Who leaves nothing unordered in His creation.

If, likewise, in every happening you are not content simply with outward appearances, if you do not regard with carnal eyes things which you see and hear, but whatever be the affair, enter with Moses into the tabernacle to ask advice of the Lord, you will sometimes hear the divine answer and return instructed in many things present and to come. For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle for the solution of doubts and questions, and fled to prayer for support in dangers and the evil deeds of men. So you also should take refuge in the secret chamber of your heart, begging earnestly for divine aid.

For this reason, as we read, Joshua and the children of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites because they did not first seek counsel of the Lord, but trusted too much in fair words and hence were deceived by false piety.

The Thirty-Ninth Chapter

A Man Should Not Be Unduly Solicitous About His Affairs

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, always commit your cause to Me. I will dispose of it rightly in good time. Await My ordering of it and it will be to your advantage.

THE DISCIPLE

Lord, I willingly commit all things to You, for my anxiety can profit me little. But I would that I were not so concerned about the future, and instead offered myself without hesitation to Your good pleasure.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, it often happens that a man seeks ardently after something he desires and then when he has attained it he begins to think that it is not at all desirable; for affections do not remain fixed on the same thing, but rather flit from one to another. It is no very small matter, therefore, for a man to forsake himself even in things that are very small.

A man's true progress consists in denying himself, and the man who has denied himself is truly free and secure. The old enemy, however, setting himself against all good, never ceases to tempt them, but day and night plots dangerous snares to cast the unwary into the net of deceit. "Watch ye and pray," says the Lord, "that ye enter not into temptation."³⁹

The Fortieth Chapter

Man Has No Good in Himself and Can Glory in Nothing

THE DISCIPLE

LORD, what is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him? What has man deserved that You should give him Your grace? What cause have I, Lord, to complain if You desert me, or what objection can I have if You do not do what I ask? This I may think and say in all truth: “Lord, I am nothing, of myself I have nothing that is good; I am lacking in all things, and I am ever tending toward nothing. And unless I have Your help and am inwardly strengthened by You, I become quite lukewarm and lax.”

But You, Lord, are always the same. You remain forever, always good, just, and holy; doing all things rightly, justly, and holily, disposing them wisely. I, however, who am more ready to go backward than forward, do not remain always in one state, for I change with the seasons. Yet my condition quickly improves when it pleases You and when You reach forth Your helping hand. For You alone, without human aid, can help me and strengthen me so greatly that my heart shall no more change but be converted and rest solely in You. Hence, if I knew well how to cast aside all earthly consolation, either to attain devotion or because of the necessity which, in the absence of human solace, compels me to seek You alone, then I could deservedly hope for Your grace and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

Thanks be to You from Whom all things come, whenever it is well with me. In Your sight I am vanity and nothingness, a weak, unstable man. In what, therefore, can I glory, and how can I wish to be highly regarded? Is it because I am nothing? This, too, is utterly vain. Indeed, the greatest vanity is the evil plague of empty self-glory, because it draws one away from true glory and robs one of heavenly grace. For when a man is pleased with himself he displeases You, when he pants after human praise he is deprived of true virtue. But it is true glory and holy exultation to glory in You and not

in self, to rejoice in Your name rather than in one's own virtue, and not to delight in any creature except for Your sake.

Let Your name, not mine, be praised. Let Your work, not mine, be magnified. Let Your holy name be blessed, but let no human praise be given to me. You are my glory. You are the joy of my heart. In You I will glory and rejoice all the day, and for myself I will glory in nothing but my infirmities.

Let the Jews seek the glory that comes from another. I will seek that which comes from God alone. All human glory, all temporal honor, all worldly position is truly vanity and foolishness compared to Your everlasting glory. O my Truth, my Mercy, my God, O Blessed Trinity, to You alone be praise and honor, power and glory, throughout all the endless ages of ages.

The Forty-First Chapter
Contempt for All Earthly Honor

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, do not take it to heart if you see others honored and advanced, while you yourself are despised and humbled. Lift up your heart to Me in heaven and the contempt of men on earth will not grieve you.

THE DISCIPLE

Lord, we are blinded and quickly misled by vanity. If I examine myself rightly, no injury has ever been done me by any creature; hence I have nothing for which to make just complaint to You. But I have sinned often and gravely against You; therefore is every creature in arms against me. Confusion and contempt should in justice come upon me, but to You due praise, honor, and glory. And unless I prepare myself to be willingly despised and forsaken by every creature, to be considered absolutely nothing, I cannot have interior peace and strength, nor can I be enlightened spiritually or completely united with You.

The Forty-Second Chapter
Peace is Not to Be Placed in Men

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, if you place your peace in any creature because of your own feeling or for the sake of his company, you will be unsettled and entangled. But if you have recourse to the ever-living and abiding Truth, you will not grieve if a friend should die or forsake you. Your love for your friend should be grounded in Me, and for My sake you should love whoever seems to be good and is very dear to you in this life. Without Me friendship has no strength and cannot endure. Love which I do not bind is neither true nor pure.

You ought, therefore, to be so dead to such human affections as to wish as far as lies within you to be without the fellowship of men. Man draws nearer to God in proportion as he withdraws farther from all earthly comfort. And he ascends higher to God as he descends lower into himself and grows more vile in his own eyes. He who attributes any good to himself hinders God's grace from coming into his heart, for the grace of the Holy Spirit seeks always the humble heart.

If you knew how to annihilate yourself completely and empty yourself of all created love, then I should overflow in you with great grace. When you look to creatures, the sight of the Creator is taken from you. Learn, therefore, to conquer yourself in all things for the sake of your Maker. Then will you be able to attain to divine knowledge. But anything, no matter how small, that is loved and regarded inordinately keeps you back from the highest good and corrupts the soul.

The Forty-Third Chapter

Beware Vain and Worldly Knowledge

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, do not let the fine-sounding and subtle words of men deceive you. For the kingdom of heaven consists not in talk but in virtue. Attend, rather, to My words which enkindle the heart and enlighten the mind, which excite contrition and abound in manifold consolations. Never read them for the purpose of appearing more learned or more wise. Apply yourself to mortifying your vices, for this will benefit you more than your understanding of many difficult questions.

Though you shall have read and learned many things, it will always be necessary for you to return to this one principle: I am He who teaches man knowledge, and to the little ones I give a clearer understanding than can be taught by man. He to whom I speak will soon be wise and his soul will profit. But woe to those who inquire of men about many curious things, and care very little about the way they serve Me.

The time will come when Christ, the Teacher of teachers, the Lord of angels, will appear to hear the lessons of all—that is, to examine the conscience of everyone. Then He will search Jerusalem with lamps and the hidden things of darkness will be brought to light and the arguings of men's tongues be silenced.

I am He Who in one moment so enlightens the humble mind that it comprehends more of eternal truth than could be learned by ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words or clash of opinions, without ambition for honor or confusion of argument.

I am He Who teaches man to despise earthly possessions and to loathe present things, to ask after the eternal, to hunger for heaven, to fly honors and to bear with scandals, to place all hope in Me, to desire nothing apart from Me, and to love Me ardently above all things. For a certain man by loving Me

intimately learned divine truths and spoke wonders. He profited more by leaving all things than by studying subtle questions.

To some I speak of common things, to others of special matters. To some I appear with sweetness in signs and figures, and to others I appear in great light and reveal mysteries. The voice of books is but a single voice, yet it does not teach all men alike, because I within them am the Teacher and the Truth, the Examiner of hearts, the Understander of thoughts, the Promoter of acts, distributing to each as I see fit.

The Forty-Fourth Chapter

Do Not Be Concerned About Outward Things

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, there are many matters of which it is well for you to be ignorant, and to consider yourself as one who is dead upon the earth and to whom the whole world is crucified. There are many things, too, which it is well to pass by with a deaf ear, thinking, instead, of what is more to your peace. It is more profitable to turn away from things which displease you and to leave to every man his own opinion than to take part in quarrelsome talk. If you stand well with God and look to His judgment, you will more easily bear being worsted.

THE DISCIPLE

To what have we come, Lord? Behold, we bewail a temporal loss. We labor and fret for a small gain, while loss of the soul is forgotten and scarcely ever returns to mind. That which is of little or no value claims our attention, whereas that which is of highest necessity is neglected—all because man gives himself wholly to outward things. And unless he withdraws himself quickly, he willingly lies immersed in externals.

The Forty-Fifth Chapter

All Men Are Not to Be Believed, for It Is Easy to Err in Speech

THE DISCIPLE

GRANT me help in my needs, O Lord, for the aid of man is useless. How often have I failed to find faithfulness in places where I thought I possessed it! And how many times I have found it where I least expected it! Vain, therefore, is hope in men, but the salvation of the just is in You, O God. Blessed be Your name, O Lord my God, in everything that befalls us.

We are weak and unstable, quickly deceived and changed. Who is the man that is able to guard himself with such caution and care as not sometimes to fall into deception or perplexity? He who confides in You, O Lord, and seeks You with a simple heart does not fall so easily. And if some trouble should come upon him, no matter how entangled in it he may be, he will be more quickly delivered and comforted by You. For You will not forsake him who trusts in You to the very end.

Rare is the friend who remains faithful through all his friend's distress. But You, Lord, and You alone, are entirely faithful in all things; other than You, there is none so faithful.

Oh, how wise is that holy soul⁴⁰ who said: "My mind is firmly settled and founded in Christ." If that were true of me, human fear would not so easily cause me anxiety, nor would the darts of words disturb. But who can foresee all things and provide against all evils? And if things foreseen have often hurt, can those which are unlooked for do otherwise than wound us gravely? Why, indeed, have I not provided better for my wretched self? Why, too, have I so easily kept faith in others? We are but men, however, nothing more than weak men, although we are thought by many to be, and are called, angels.

In whom shall I put my faith, Lord? In whom but You? You are the truth which does not deceive and cannot be deceived. Every man, on the other

hand, is a liar, weak, unstable, and likely to err, especially in words, so that one ought not to be too quick to believe even that which seems, on the face of it, to sound true. How wise was Your warning to beware of men; that a man's enemies are those of his own household; that we should not believe if anyone says: "Behold he is here, or behold he is there."

I have been taught to my own cost, and I hope it has given me greater caution, not greater folly. "Beware," they say, "beware and keep to yourself what I tell you!" Then while I keep silent, believing that the matter is secret, he who asks me to be silent cannot remain silent himself, but immediately betrays both me and himself, and goes his way. From tales of this kind and from such careless men protect me, O Lord, lest I fall into their hands and into their ways. Put in my mouth words that are true and steadfast and keep far from me the crafty tongue, because what I am not willing to suffer I ought by all means to shun.

Oh, how good and how peaceful it is to be silent about others, not to believe without discrimination all that is said, not easily to report it further, to reveal oneself to few, always to seek You as the discerner of hearts, and not to be blown away by every wind of words, but to wish that all things, within and beyond us, be done according to the pleasure of Thy will.

How conducive it is for the keeping of heavenly grace to fly the gaze of men, not to seek abroad things which seem to cause admiration, but to follow with utmost diligence those which give fervor and amendment of life! How many have been harmed by having their virtue known and praised too hastily! And how truly profitable it has been when grace remained hidden during this frail life, which is all temptation and warfare!

The Forty-Sixth Chapter

Trust in God Against Slander

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, stand firm and trust in Me. For what are words but words? They fly through the air but hurt not a stone. If you are guilty, consider how you would gladly amend. If you are not conscious of any fault, think that you wish to bear this for the sake of God. It is little enough for you occasionally to endure words, since you are not yet strong enough to bear hard blows.

And why do such small matters pierce you to the heart, unless because you are still carnal and pay more heed to men than you ought? You do not wish to be reproved for your faults and you seek shelter in excuses because you are afraid of being despised. But look into yourself more thoroughly and you will learn that the world is still alive in you, in a vain desire to please men. For when you shrink from being abased and confounded for your failings, it is plain indeed that you are not truly humble or truly dead to the world, and that the world is not crucified in you.

Listen to My word, and you will not value ten thousand words of men. Behold, if every malicious thing that could possibly be invented were uttered against you, what harm could it do if you ignored it all and gave it no more thought than you would a blade of grass? Could it so much as pluck one hair from your head?

He who does not keep his heart within him, and who does not have God before his eyes is easily moved by a word of disparagement. He who trusts in Me, on the other hand, and who has no desire to stand by his own judgment, will be free from the fear of men. For I am the judge and discerner of all secrets. I know how all things happen. I know who causes injury and who suffers it. From Me that word proceeded, and with My permission it happened, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. I shall judge the guilty and the innocent; but I have wished beforehand to try them both by

secret judgment.

The testimony of man is often deceiving, but My judgment is true—it will stand and not be overthrown. It is hidden from many and made known to but a few. Yet it is never mistaken and cannot be mistaken even though it does not seem right in the eyes of the unwise.

To Me, therefore, you ought to come in every decision, not depending on your own judgment. For the just man will not be disturbed, no matter what may befall him from God. Even if an unjust charge be made against him he will not be much troubled. Neither will he exult vainly if through others he is justly acquitted. He considers that it is I Who search the hearts and inmost thoughts of men, that I do not judge according to the face of things or human appearances. For what the judgment of men considers praiseworthy is often worthy of blame in My sight.

THE DISCIPLE

O Lord God, just Judge, strong and patient, You Who know the weakness and depravity of men, be my strength and all my confidence, for my own conscience is not sufficient for me. You know what I do not know, and, therefore, I ought to humble myself whenever I am accused and bear it meekly. Forgive me, then, in Your mercy for my every failure in this regard, and give me once more the grace of greater endurance. Better to me is Your abundant mercy in obtaining pardon than the justice which I imagine in defending the secrets of my conscience. And though I am not conscious to myself of any fault, yet I cannot thereby justify myself, because without Your mercy no man living will be justified in Your sight.

The Forty-Seventh Chapter

Every Trial Must Be Borne for the Sake of Eternal Life

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, do not let the labors which you have taken up for My sake break you, and do not let troubles, from whatever source, cast you down; but in everything let My promise strengthen and console you. I am able to reward you beyond all means and measure.

You will not labor here long, nor will you always be oppressed by sorrows. Wait a little while and you will see a speedy end of evils. The hour will come when all labor and trouble shall be no more. All that passes away with time is trivial.

What you do, do well. Work faithfully in My vineyard. I will be your reward. Write, read, sing, mourn, keep silence, pray, and bear hardships like a man. Eternal life is worth all these and greater battles. Peace will come on a day which is known to the Lord, and then there shall be no day or night as at present but perpetual light, infinite brightness, lasting peace, and safe repose. Then you will not say: “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” nor will you cry: “Woe is me, because my sojourn is prolonged.” For then death will be banished, and there will be health unfailing. There will be no anxiety then, but blessed joy and sweet, noble companionship.

If you could see the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and the great glory wherein they now rejoice—they who were once considered contemptible in this world and, as it were, unworthy of life itself—you would certainly humble yourself at once to the very earth, and seek to be subject to all rather than to command even one. Nor would you desire the pleasant days of this life, but rather be glad to suffer for God, considering it your greatest gain to be counted as nothing among men.

Oh, if these things appealed to you and penetrated deeply into your heart, how could you dare to complain even once? Ought not all trials be borne for

the sake of everlasting life? In truth, the loss or gain of God's kingdom is no small matter.

Lift up your countenance to heaven, then. Behold Me, and with Me all My saints. They had great trials in this life, but now they rejoice. They are consoled. Now they are safe and at rest. And they shall abide with Me for all eternity in the kingdom of My Father.

The Forty-Eighth Chapter

The Day of Eternity and the Distresses of This Life

THE DISCIPLE

O MOST happy mansion of the city above! O most bright day of eternity, which night does not darken, but which the highest truth ever enlightens! O day, ever joyful and ever secure, which never changes its state to the opposite! Oh, that this day shine forth, that all these temporal things come to an end! It envelops the saints all resplendent with heavenly brightness, but it appears far off as through a glass to us wanderers on the earth. The citizens of heaven know how joyful that day is, but the exiled sons of Eve mourn that this one is bitter and tedious.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of grief and distress. Here man is defiled by many sins, ensnared in many passions, enslaved by many fears, and burdened with many cares. He is distracted by many curiosities and entangled in many vanities, surrounded by many errors and worn by many labors, oppressed by temptations, weakened by pleasures, and tortured by want.

Oh, when will these evils end? When shall I be freed from the miserable slavery of vice? When, Lord, shall I think of You alone? When shall I fully rejoice in You? When shall I be without hindrance, in true liberty, free from every grievance of mind and body? When will there be solid peace, undisturbed and secure, inward peace and outward peace, peace secured on every side? O good Jesus, when shall I stand to gaze upon You? When shall I contemplate the glory of Your kingdom? When will You be all in all to me? Oh, when shall I be with You in that kingdom of Yours, which You have prepared for Your beloved from all eternity?

I am left poor and exiled in a hostile land, where every day sees wars and very great misfortunes. Console my banishment, assuage my sorrow. My whole desire is for You. Whatever solace this world offers is a burden to me.

I desire to enjoy You intimately, but I cannot attain to it. I wish to cling fast to heavenly things, but temporal affairs and unmortified passions bear me down. I wish in mind to be above all things, but I am forced by the flesh to be unwillingly subject to them. Thus, I fight with myself, unhappy that I am, and am become a burden to myself, while my spirit seeks to rise upward and my flesh to sink downward. Oh, what inward suffering I undergo when I consider heavenly things; when I pray, a multitude of carnal thoughts rush upon me!

O my God, do not remove Yourself far from me, and depart not in anger from Your servant. Dart forth Your lightning and disperse them; send forth Your arrows and let the phantoms of the enemy be put to flight. Draw my senses toward You and make me forget all worldly things. Grant me the grace to cast away quickly all vicious imaginings and to scorn them. Aid me, O heavenly Truth, that no vanity may move me. Come, heavenly Sweetness, and let all impurity fly from before Your face.

Pardon me also, and deal mercifully with me, as often as I think of anything besides You in prayer. For I confess truly that I am accustomed to be very much distracted. Very often I am not where bodily I stand or sit; rather, I am where my thoughts carry me. Where my thoughts are, there am I; and frequently my thoughts are where my love is. That which naturally delights, or is by habit pleasing, comes to me quickly. Hence You Who are Truth itself, have plainly said: "For where your treasure is, there is your heart also." If I love heaven, I think willingly of heavenly things. If I love the world, I rejoice at the happiness of the world and grieve at its troubles. If I love the flesh, I often imagine things that are carnal. If I love the spirit, I delight in thinking of spiritual matters. For whatever I love, I am willing to speak and hear about.

Blessed is the man who for Your sake, O Lord, dismisses all creatures, does violence to nature, crucifies the desires of the flesh in fervor of spirit, so that with serene conscience he can offer You a pure prayer and, having excluded all earthly things inwardly and outwardly, becomes worthy to enter into the heavenly choirs.

The Forty-Ninth Chapter

The Desire of Eternal Life; the Great Rewards Promised to Those Who Struggle

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, when you feel the desire for everlasting happiness poured out upon you from above, and when you long to depart out of the tabernacle of the body that you may contemplate My glory without threat of change, open wide your heart and receive this holy inspiration with all eagerness. Give deepest thanks to the heavenly Goodness which deals with you so understandingly, visits you so mercifully, stirs you so fervently, and sustains you so powerfully lest under your own weight you sink down to earthly things. For you obtain this not by your own thought or effort, but simply by the condescension of heavenly grace and divine regard. And the purpose of it is that you may advance in virtue and in greater humility, that you may prepare yourself for future trials, that you may strive to cling to Me with all the affection of your heart, and may serve Me with a fervent will.

My child, often, when the fire is burning the flame does not ascend without smoke. Likewise, the desires of some burn toward heavenly things, and yet they are not free from temptations of carnal affection. Therefore, it is not altogether for the pure honor of God that they act when they petition Him so earnestly. Such, too, is often your desire which you profess to be so strong. For that which is alloyed with self-interest is not pure and perfect.

Ask, therefore, not for what is pleasing and convenient to yourself, but for what is acceptable to Me and is for My honor, because if you judge rightly, you ought to prefer and follow My will, not your own desire or whatever things you wish.

I know your longings and I have heard your frequent sighs. Already you wish to be in the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. Already you desire the delights of the eternal home, the heavenly land that is full of joy. But that

hour is not yet come. There remains yet another hour, a time of war, of labor, and of trial. You long to be filled with the highest good, but you cannot attain it now. I am that sovereign Good. Await Me, until the kingdom of God shall come.

You must still be tried on earth, and exercised in many things. Consolation will sometimes be given you, but the complete fullness of it is not granted. Take courage, therefore, and be strong both to do and to suffer what is contrary to nature.

You must put on the new man. You must be changed into another man. You must often do the things you do not wish to do and forego those you do wish. What pleases others will succeed; what pleases you will not. The words of others will be heard; what you say will be accounted as nothing. Others will ask and receive; you will ask and not receive. Others will gain great fame among men; about you nothing will be said. To others the doing of this or that will be entrusted; you will be judged useless. At all this nature will sometimes be sad, and it will be a great thing if you bear this sadness in silence. For in these and many similar ways the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried, to see how far he can deny himself and break himself in all things.

There is scarcely anything in which you so need to die to self as in seeing and suffering things that are against your will, especially when things that are commanded seem inconvenient or useless. Then, because you are under authority, and dare not resist the higher power, it seems hard to submit to the will of another and give up your own opinion entirely.

But consider, my child, the fruit of these labors, how soon they will end and how greatly they will be rewarded, and you will not be saddened by them, but your patience will receive the strongest consolation. For instead of the little will that you now readily give up, you shall always have your will in heaven. There, indeed, you shall find all that you could desire. There you shall have possession of every good without fear of losing it. There shall your will be forever one with Mine. It shall desire nothing outside of Me and nothing for itself. There no one shall oppose you, no one shall complain of you, no one hinder you, and nothing stand in your way. All that you desire will be present there, replenishing your affection and satisfying it to the full. There I shall render you glory for the reproach you have suffered here; for your sorrow I shall give you a garment of praise, and for the lowest place a seat of power forever. There the fruit of glory will appear, the labor of

penance rejoice, and humble subjection be gloriously crowned.

Bow humbly, therefore, under the will of all, and do not heed who said this or commanded that. But let it be your special care when something is commanded, or even hinted at, whether by a superior or an inferior or an equal, that you take it in good part and try honestly to perform it. Let one person seek one thing and another something else. Let one glory in this, another in that, and both be praised a thousand times over. But as for you, rejoice neither in one or the other, but only in contempt of yourself and in My pleasure and honor. Let this be your wish: That whether in life or in death God may be glorified in you.

The Fiftieth Chapter

How a Desolate Person Ought to Commit Himself Into the Hands of God

THE DISCIPLE

LORD God, Holy Father, may You be blessed now and in eternity. For as You will, so is it done; and what You do is good. Let Your servant rejoice in You—not in himself or in any other, for You alone are true joy. You are my hope and my crown. You, O Lord, are my joy and my honor.

What does Your servant possess that he has not received from You, and that without any merit of his own? Yours are all the things which You have given, all the things which You have made.

I am poor and in labors since my youth, and my soul is sorrowful sometimes even to the point of tears. At times, also, my spirit is troubled because of impending sufferings. I long for the joy of peace. Earnestly I beg for the peace of Your children who are fed by You in the light of consolation. If You give peace, if You infuse holy joy, the soul of Your servant shall be filled with holy song and be devout in praising You. But if You withdraw Yourself, as You so very often do, he will not be able to follow the way of Your commandments, but will rather be obliged to strike his breast and bend the knee, because his today is different from yesterday and the day before when Your light shone upon his head and he was protected in the shadow of Your wings from the temptations rushing upon him.

Just Father, ever to be praised, the hour is come for Your servant to be tried. Beloved Father, it is right that in this hour Your servant should suffer something for You. O Father, forever to be honored, the hour which You knew from all eternity is at hand, when for a short time Your servant should be outwardly oppressed, but inwardly should ever live with You.

Let him be a little slighted, let him be humbled, let him fail in the sight of men, let him be afflicted with sufferings and pains, so that he may rise again

with You in the dawn of the new light and be glorified in heaven.

Holy Father, You have so appointed and wished it. What has happened is what You commanded. For this is a favor to Your friend, to suffer and be troubled in the world for Your love, no matter how often and by whom You permit it to happen to him.

Nothing happens in the world without Your design and providence, and without cause. It is well for me, O Lord, that You have humbled me, that I may learn the justice of Your judgments and cast away all presumption and haughtiness of heart. It is profitable for me that shame has covered my face that I may look to You rather than to men for consolation. Hereby I have learned also to fear Your inscrutable judgment falling alike upon the just and unjust yet not without equity and justice.

Thanks to You that You have not spared me evils but have bruised me with bitter blows, inflicting sorrows, sending distress without and within. Under heaven there is none to console me except You, my Lord God, the heavenly Physician of souls, Who wound and heal, Who cast down to hell and raise up again. Your discipline is upon me and Your very rod shall instruct me.

Behold, beloved Father, I am in Your hands. I bow myself under Your correcting chastisement. Strike my back and my neck, that I may bend my crookedness to Your will. Make of me a pious and humble follower, as in Your goodness You are wont to do, that I may walk according to Your every nod. Myself and all that is mine I commit to You to be corrected, for it is better to be punished here than hereafter.

You know all things without exception, and nothing in man's conscience is hidden from You. Coming events You know before they happen, and there is no need for anyone to teach or admonish You of what is being done on earth. You know what will promote my progress, and how much tribulation will serve to cleanse away the rust of vice. Deal with me according to Your good pleasure and do not despise my sinful life, which is known to none so well or so clearly as to You alone.

Grant me, O Lord, the grace to know what should be known, to praise what is most pleasing to You, to esteem that which appears most precious to You, and to abhor what is unclean in Your sight.

Do not allow me to judge according to the light of my bodily eyes, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of ignorant men's ears. But let me distinguish with true judgment between things visible and spiritual, and

always seek above all things Your good pleasure. The senses of men often err in their judgments, and the lovers of this world also err in loving only visible things. How is a man the better for being thought greater by men? The deceiver deceives the deceitful, the vain man deceives the vain, the blind deceives the blind, the weak deceives the weak as often as he extols them, and in truth his foolish praise shames them the more. For, as the humble St. Francis says, whatever anyone is in Your sight, that he is and nothing more.

The Fifty-First Chapter

When We Cannot Attain to the Highest, We Must Practice the Humble Works

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, you cannot always continue in the more fervent desire of virtue, or remain in the higher stage of contemplation, but because of humanity's sin you must sometimes descend to lower things and bear the burden of this corruptible life, albeit unwillingly and wearily. As long as you wear a mortal body you will suffer weariness and heaviness of heart. You ought, therefore, to bewail in the flesh the burden of the flesh which keeps you from giving yourself unceasingly to spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.

In such condition, it is well for you to apply yourself to humble, outward works and to refresh yourself in good deeds, to await with unshaken confidence My heavenly visitation, patiently to bear your exile and dryness of mind until you are again visited by Me and freed of all anxieties. For I will cause you to forget your labors and to enjoy inward quiet. I will spread before you the open fields of the Scriptures, so that with an open heart you may begin to advance in the way of My commandments. And you will say: the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory which shall be revealed to us.

The Fifty-Second Chapter

A Man Ought Not to Consider Himself Worthy of Consolation, But Rather Deserving of Chastisement

THE DISCIPLE

LORD, I am not worthy of Your consolation or of any spiritual visitation. Therefore, You treat me justly when You leave me poor and desolate. For though I could shed a sea of tears, yet I should not be worthy of Your consolation. Hence, I deserve only to be scourged and punished because I have offended You often and grievously, and have sinned greatly in many things. In all justice, therefore, I am not worthy of any consolation.

But You, O gracious and merciful God, Who do not will that Your works should perish, deign to console Your servant beyond all his merit and above human measure, to show the riches of Your goodness toward the vessels of mercy. For Your consolations are not like the words of men.

What have I done, Lord, that You should confer on me any heavenly comfort? I remember that I have done nothing good, but that I have always been prone to sin and slow to amend. That is true. I cannot deny it. If I said otherwise You would stand against me, and there would be no one to defend me. What have I deserved for my sins except hell and everlasting fire?

In truth, I confess that I am deserving of all scorn and contempt. Neither is it fitting that I should be remembered among Your devoted servants. And although it is hard for me to hear this, yet for truth's sake I will allege my sins against myself, so that I may more easily deserve to beg Your mercy. What shall I say, guilty as I am and full of all confusion? My tongue can say nothing but this alone: "I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy on me and pardon me. Suffer me a little that I may pour out my grief, before I go to that dark land that is covered with the shadow of death."

What do you especially demand of a guilty and wretched sinner, except that he be contrite and humble himself for his sins? In true sorrow and

humility of heart hope of forgiveness is born, the troubled conscience is reconciled, grace is found, man is preserved from the wrath to come, and God and the penitent meet with a holy kiss.

To You, O Lord, humble sorrow for sins is an acceptable sacrifice, a sacrifice far sweeter than the perfume of incense. This is also the pleasing ointment which You would have poured upon Your sacred feet, for a contrite and humble heart You have never despised. Here is a place of refuge from the force of the enemy's anger. Here is amended and washed away whatever defilement has been contracted elsewhere.

The Fifty-Third Chapter

God's Grace Is Not Given to the Earthly Minded

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, my grace is precious. It does not allow itself to be mixed with external things or with earthly consolations. Cast away all obstacles to grace, therefore, if you wish to receive its infusion.

Seek to retire within yourself. Love to dwell alone with yourself. Seek no man's conversation, but rather pour forth devout prayer to God that you may keep your mind contrite and your heart pure.

Consider the whole world as nothing. Prefer attendance upon God to all outward occupation, for you cannot attend upon Me and at the same time take delight in external things. You must remove yourself from acquaintances and from dear friends, and keep your mind free of all temporal consolation. Thus the blessed Apostle St. Peter begs the faithful of Christ to keep themselves as strangers and pilgrims in the world.⁴¹

What great confidence at the hour of death shall be his who is not attached to this world by any affection. But the sickly soul does not know what it is to have a heart thus separated from all things, nor does the natural man know the liberty of the spiritual man. Yet, if he truly wishes to be spiritual, he must renounce both strangers and friends, and must beware of no one more than himself.

If you completely conquer yourself, you will more easily subdue all other things. The perfect victory is to triumph over self. For he who holds himself in such subjection that sensuality obeys reason and reason obeys Me in all matters, is truly his own conqueror and master of the world.

Now, if you wish to climb to this high position you must begin like a man, and lay the ax to the root, in order to tear out and destroy any hidden unruly love of self or of earthly goods. From this vice of too much self-love comes almost every other vice that must be uprooted. And when this evil is

vanquished, and brought under control, great peace and quiet will follow at once.

But because few labor to die entirely to self, or tend completely away from self, therefore they remain entangled in self, and cannot be lifted in spirit above themselves. But he who desires to walk freely with Me must mortify all his low and inordinate affections, and must not cling with selfish love or desire to any creature.

The Fifty-Fourth Chapter

The Different Motions of Nature and Grace

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, pay careful attention to the movements of nature and of grace, for they move in very contrary and subtle ways, and can scarcely be distinguished by anyone except a man who is spiritual and inwardly enlightened. All men, indeed, desire what is good, and strive for what is good in their words and deeds. For this reason the appearance of good deceives many.

Nature is crafty and attracts many, ensnaring and deceiving them while ever seeking itself. But grace walks in simplicity, turns away from all appearance of evil, offers no deceits, and does all purely for God in whom she rests as her last end.

Nature is not willing to die, or to be kept down, or to be overcome. Nor will it subdue itself or be made subject. Grace, on the contrary, strives for mortification of self. She resists sensuality, seeks to be in subjection, longs to be conquered, has no wish to use her own liberty, loves to be held under discipline, and does not desire to rule over anyone, but wishes rather to live, to stand, and to be always under God for Whose sake she is willing to bow humbly to every human creature.

Nature works for its own interest and looks to the profit it can reap from another. Grace does not consider what is useful and advantageous to herself, but rather what is profitable to many. Nature likes to receive honor and reverence, but grace faithfully attributes all honor and glory to God. Nature fears shame and contempt, but grace is happy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. Nature loves ease and physical rest. Grace, however, cannot bear to be idle and embraces labor willingly. Nature seeks to possess what is rare and beautiful, abhorring things that are cheap and coarse. Grace, on the contrary, delights in simple, humble things, not despising those that are rough, nor

refusing to be clothed in old garments.

Nature has regard for temporal wealth and rejoices in earthly gains. It is sad over a loss and irritated by a slight, injurious word. But grace looks to eternal things and does not cling to those which are temporal, being neither disturbed at loss nor angered by hard words, because she has placed her treasure and joy in heaven where nothing is lost.

Nature is covetous, and receives more willingly than it gives. It loves to have its own private possessions. Grace, however, is kind and openhearted. Grace shuns private interest, is contented with little, and judges it more blessed to give than to receive.

Nature is inclined toward creatures, toward its own flesh, toward vanities, and toward running about. But grace draws near to God and to virtue, renounces creatures, hates the desires of the flesh, restrains her wanderings and blushes at being seen in public.

Nature likes to have some external comfort in which it can take sensual delight, but grace seeks consolation only in God, to find her delight in the highest Good, above all visible things.

Nature does everything for its own gain and interest. It can do nothing without pay and hopes for its good deeds to receive their equal or better, or else praise and favor. It is very desirous of having its deeds and gifts highly regarded. Grace, however, seeks nothing temporal, nor does she ask any recompense but God alone. Of temporal necessities she asks no more than will serve to obtain eternity.

Nature rejoices in many friends and kinsfolk, glories in noble position and birth, fawns on the powerful, flatters the rich, and applauds those who are like itself. But grace loves even her enemies and is not puffed up at having many friends. She does not think highly of either position or birth unless there is also virtue there. She favors the poor in preference to the rich. She sympathizes with the innocent rather than with the powerful. She rejoices with the true man rather than with the deceitful, and is always exhorting the good to strive for better gifts, to become like the Son of God by practicing the virtues.

Nature is quick to complain of need and trouble; grace is stanch in suffering want.

Nature turns all things back to self. It fights and argues for self. Grace brings all things back to God in Whom they have their source. To herself she ascribes no good, nor is she arrogant or presumptuous. She is not contentious.

She does not prefer her own opinion to the opinion of others, but in every matter of sense and thought submits herself to eternal wisdom and the divine judgment.

Nature has a relish for knowing secrets and hearing news. It wishes to appear abroad and to have many sense experiences. It wishes to be known and to do things for which it will be praised and admired. But grace does not care to hear news or curious matters, because all this arises from the old corruption of man, since there is nothing new, nothing lasting on earth. Grace teaches, therefore, restraint of the senses, avoidance of vain self-satisfaction and show, the humble hiding of deeds worthy of praise and admiration, and the seeking in every thing and in every knowledge the fruit of usefulness, the praise and honor of God. She will not have herself or hers exalted, but desires that God Who bestows all simply out of love should be blessed in His gifts.

This grace is a supernatural light, a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect and the pledge of everlasting salvation. It raises man up from earthly things to love the things of heaven. It makes a spiritual man of a carnal one.

The more, then, nature is held in check and conquered, the more grace is given. Every day the interior man is reformed by new visitations according to the image of God.

The Fifty-Fifth Chapter

The Corruption of Nature and the Efficacy of Divine Grace

THE DISCIPLE

O LORD, my God, Who created me to Your own image and likeness, grant me this grace which You have shown to be so great and necessary for salvation, that I may overcome my very evil nature that is drawing me to sin and perdition. For I feel in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind and leading me captive to serve sensuality in many things. I cannot resist the passions thereof unless Your most holy grace warmly infused into my heart assist me.

There is need of Your grace, and of great grace, in order to overcome a nature prone to evil from youth. For through the first man, Adam, nature is fallen and weakened by sin, and the punishment of that stain has fallen upon all mankind. Thus nature itself, which You created good and right, is considered a symbol of vice and the weakness of corrupted nature, because when left to itself it tends toward evil and to baser things. The little strength remaining in it is like a spark hidden in ashes. That strength is natural reason which, surrounded by thick darkness, still has the power of judging good and evil, of seeing the difference between true and false, though it is not able to fulfill all that it approves and does not enjoy the full light of truth or soundness of affection.

Hence it is, my God, that according to the inward man I delight in Your law, knowing that Your command is good, just, and holy, and that it proves the necessity of shunning all evil and sin. But in the flesh I keep the law of sin, obeying sensuality rather than reason. Hence, also, it is that the will to good is present in me, but how to accomplish it I know not. Hence, too, I often propose many good things, but because the grace to help my weakness is lacking, I recoil and give up at the slightest resistance. Thus it is that I know the way of perfection and see clearly enough how I ought to act, but

because I am pressed down by the weight of my own corruption I do not rise to more perfect things.

How extremely necessary to me, O Lord, Your grace is to begin any good deed, to carry it on and bring it to completion! For without grace I can do nothing, but with its strength I can do all things in You. O Grace truly heavenly, without which our merits are nothing and no gifts of nature are to be esteemed!

Before You, O Lord, no arts or riches, no beauty or strength, no wit or intelligence avail without grace. For the gifts of nature are common to good and bad alike, but the peculiar gift of Your elect is grace or love, and those who are signed with it are held worthy of everlasting life. So excellent is this grace that without it no gift of prophecy or of miracles, no meditation be it ever so exalted, can be considered anything. Not even faith or hope or other virtues are acceptable to You without charity and grace.

O most blessed grace, which makes the poor in spirit rich in virtues, which renders him who is rich in many good things humble of heart, come, descend upon me, fill me quickly with your consolation lest my soul faint with weariness and dryness of mind.

Let me find grace in Your sight, I beg, Lord, for Your grace is enough for me, even though I obtain none of the things which nature desires. If I am tempted and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils while Your grace is with me. This is my strength. This will give me counsel and help. This is more powerful than all my enemies and wiser than all the wise. This is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the consoler in anguish, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nourisher of devotion, the producer of tears. What am I without grace, but dead wood, a useless branch, fit only to be cast away?

Let Your grace, therefore, go before me and follow me, O Lord, and make me always intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ, Your Son.

The Fifty-Sixth Chapter

We Ought to Deny Ourselves and Imitate Christ Through Bearing the Cross

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, the more you depart from yourself, the more you will be able to enter into Me. As the giving up of exterior things brings interior peace, so the forsaking of self unites you to God. I will have you learn perfect surrender to My will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow Me. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Without the Way, there is no going. Without the Truth, there is no knowing. Without the Life, there is no living. I am the Way which you must follow, the Truth which you must believe, the Life for which you must hope. I am the inviolable Way, the infallible Truth, the unending Life. I am the Way that is straight, the supreme Truth, the Life that is true, the blessed, the uncreated Life. If you abide in My Way you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free, and you shall attain life everlasting.

If you wish to enter into life, keep My commandments. If you will know the truth, believe in Me. If you will be perfect, sell all. If you will be My disciple, deny yourself. If you will possess the blessed life, despise this present life. If you will be exalted in heaven, humble yourself on earth. If you wish to reign with Me, carry the Cross with Me. For only the servants of the Cross find the life of blessedness and of true light.

THE DISCIPLE

Lord Jesus, because Your way is narrow and despised by the world, grant that I may despise the world and imitate You. For the servant is not greater than his Lord, nor The Disciple above the Master. Let Your servant be trained in Your life, for there is my salvation and true holiness. Whatever else I read

or hear does not fully refresh or delight me.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

My child, now that you know these things and have read them all, happy will you be if you do them. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me. And I will love him and will show Myself to him, and will bring it about that he will sit down with Me in My Father's Kingdom.

THE DISCIPLE

Lord Jesus, as You have said, so be it, and what You have promised, let it be my lot to win. I have received the cross, from Your hand I have received it. I will carry it, carry it even unto death as You have laid it upon me. Truly, the life of a good religious man is a cross, but it leads to paradise. We have begun—we may not go back, nor may we leave off.

Take courage, brethren, let us go forward together and Jesus will be with us. For Jesus' sake we have taken this cross. For Jesus' sake let us persevere with it. He will be our help as He is also our leader and guide. Behold, our King goes before us and will fight for us. Let us follow like men. Let no man fear any terrors. Let us be prepared to meet death valiantly in battle. Let us not suffer our glory to be blemished by fleeing from the Cross.

The Fifty-Seventh Chapter

A Man Should Not Be Too Downcast When He Falls Into Defects

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to Me than much consolation and devotion when things are going well.

Why are you saddened by some little thing said against you? Even if it had been more you ought not to have been affected. But now let it pass. It is not the first, nor is it anything new, and if you live long it will not be the last.

You are manly enough so long as you meet no opposition. You give good advice to others, and you know how to strengthen them with words, but when unexpected tribulation comes to your door, you fail both in counsel and in strength. Consider your great weakness, then, which you experience so often in small matters. Yet when these and like trials happen, they happen for your good.

Put it out of your heart as best you know how, and if it has touched you, still do not let it cast you down or confuse you for long. Bear it patiently at least, if you cannot bear it cheerfully. Even though you bear it unwillingly, and are indignant at it, restrain yourself and let no ill-ordered words pass your lips at which the weak might be scandalized. The storm that is now aroused will soon be quieted and your inward grief will be sweetened by returning grace. “I yet live,” says the Lord, “ready to help you and to console you more and more, if you trust in Me and call devoutly upon Me.”

Remain tranquil and prepare to bear still greater trials. All is not lost even though you be troubled oftener or tempted more grievously. You are a man, not God. You are flesh, not an angel. How can you possibly expect to remain always in the same state of virtue when the angels in heaven and the first man in paradise failed to do so? I am He Who rescues the afflicted and brings to My divinity those who know their own weakness.

THE DISCIPLE

Blessed be Your words, O Lord, sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honeycomb. What would I do in such great trials and anxieties, if You did not strengthen me with Your holy words? If I may but attain to the haven of salvation, what does it matter what or how much I suffer? Grant me a good end. Grant me a happy passage out of this world. Remember me, my God, and lead me by the right way into Your kingdom.

The Fifty-Eighth Chapter

High Matters and the Hidden Judgments of God Are Not to Be Scrutinized

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

MY CHILD, beware of discussing high matters and God's hidden judgments—why this person is so forsaken and why that one is favored with so great a grace, or why one man is so afflicted and another so highly exalted. Such things are beyond all human understanding and no reason or disputation can fathom the judgments of God.

When the enemy puts such suggestions in your mind, therefore, or when some curious persons raise questions about them, answer with the prophet: “Thou art just, O Lord, and righteous are Thy judgments”;⁴² and this: “The judgments of the Lord are true and wholly righteous.”⁴³ My judgments are to be feared, not discussed, because they are incomprehensible to the understanding of men.

In like manner, do not inquire or dispute about the merits of the saints, as to which is more holy, or which shall be greater in the kingdom of heaven. Such things often breed strife and useless contentions. They nourish pride and vainglory, whence arise envy and quarrels, when one proudly tries to exalt one saint and the other another. A desire to know and pry into such matters brings forth no fruit. On the contrary, it displeases the saints, because I am the God, not of dissension, but of peace—of that peace which consists in true humility rather than in self-exaltation.

Some are drawn by the ardor of their love with greater affection to these saints or to those, but this affection is human and not divine. I am He who made all the saints. I gave them grace: I brought them to glory. I know the merits of each of them. I came before them in the blessings of My sweetness. I knew My beloved ones before the ages. I chose them out of the world—they did not choose Me. I called them by grace, I drew them on by mercy. I led

them safely through various temptations. I poured into them glorious consolations. I gave them perseverance and I crowned their patience. I know the first and the last. I embrace them all with love inestimable. I am to be praised in all My saints. I am to be blessed above all things, and honored in each of those whom I have exalted and predestined so gloriously without any previous merits of their own.

He who despises one of the least of mine, therefore, does no honor to the greatest, for both the small and the great I made. And he who disparages one of the saints disparages Me also and all others in the kingdom of heaven. They are all one through the bond of charity. They have the same thought and the same will, and they mutually love one another; but, what is a much greater thing, they love Me more than themselves or their own merits. Rapt above themselves, and drawn beyond love of self, they are entirely absorbed in love of Me, in Whom they rest. There is nothing that can draw them away or depress them, for they who are filled with eternal truth burn with the fire of unquenchable love.

Therefore, let carnal and sensual men, who know only how to love their own selfish joys, forbear to dispute about the state of God's saints. Such men take away and add according to their own inclinations and not as it pleases the Eternal Truth. In many this is sheer ignorance, especially in those who are but little enlightened and can rarely love anyone with a purely spiritual love. They are still strongly drawn by natural affection and human friendship to one person or another, and on their behavior in such things here below are based their imaginings of heavenly things. But there is an incomparable distance between the things which the imperfect imagine and those which enlightened men contemplate through revelation from above.

Be careful, then, My child, of treating matters beyond your knowledge out of curiosity. Let it rather be your business and aim to be found, even though the least, in the kingdom of God. For though one were to know who is more holy than another, or who is greater in the kingdom of heaven, of what value would this knowledge be to him unless out of it he should humble himself before Me and should rise up in greater praise of My name?

The man who thinks of the greatness of his own sins and the littleness of his virtues, and of the distance between himself and the perfection of the saints, acts much more acceptably to God than the one who argues about who is greater or who is less. It is better to invoke the saints with devout prayers and tears, and with a humble mind to beg their glorious aid, than to search

with vain inquisitiveness into their secrets.

The saints are well and perfectly contented if men know how to content themselves and cease their useless discussions. They do not glory in their own merits, for they attribute no good to themselves but all to Me, because out of My infinite charity I gave all to them. They are filled with such love of God and with such overflowing joy, that no glory is wanting to them and they can lack no happiness. All the saints are so much higher in glory as they are more humble in themselves; nearer to Me, and more beloved by Me. Therefore, you find it written that they cast their crowns before God, and fell down upon their faces before the Lamb, and adored Him Who lives forever.

Many ask who is the greater in the kingdom of heaven when they do not know whether they themselves shall be worthy of being numbered among its least. It is a great thing to be even the least in heaven where all are great because all shall be called, and shall be, the children of God. The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die. For when The Disciples asked who should be greater in the kingdom of heaven they heard this response: “Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.”⁴⁴

Woe to those, therefore, who disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little children, for the low gate of the heavenly kingdom will not permit them to enter. Woe also to the rich who have their consolations here, for when the poor enter into God’s kingdom, they will stand outside lamenting. Rejoice, you humble, and exult, you poor, for the kingdom of God is yours, if only you walk in the truth.

The Fifty-Ninth Chapter

All Hope and Trust Are to Be Fixed In God Alone

THE DISCIPLE

WHAT, Lord, is the trust which I have in this life, or what is my greatest comfort among all the things that appear under heaven? Is it not You, O Lord, my God, Whose mercies are without number? Where have I ever fared well but for You? Or how could things go badly when You were present? I had rather be poor for Your sake than rich without You. I prefer rather to wander on the earth with You than to possess heaven without You. Where You are there is heaven, and where You are not are death and hell. You are my desire and therefore I must cry after You and sigh and pray. In none can I fully trust to help me in my necessities, but in You alone, my God. You are my hope. You are my confidence. You are my consoler, most faithful in every need.

All seek their own interests. You, however, place my salvation and my profit first, and turn all things to my good. Even though exposing me to various temptations and hardships, You Who are accustomed to prove Your loved ones in a thousand ways, order all this for my good. You ought not to be loved or praised less in this trial than if You had filled me with heavenly consolations.

In You, therefore, O Lord God, I place all my hope and my refuge. On You I cast all my troubles and anguish, because whatever I have outside of You I find to be weak and unstable. It will not serve me to have many friends, nor will powerful helpers be able to assist me, nor prudent advisers to give useful answers, nor the books of learned men to console, nor any precious substance to win my freedom, nor any place, secret and beautiful though it be, to shelter me, if You Yourself do not assist, comfort, console, instruct, and guard me. For all things which seem to be for our peace and happiness are nothing when You are absent, and truly confer no happiness.

You, indeed, are the fountain of all good, the height of life, the depth of all that can be spoken. To trust in You above all things is the strongest comfort of Your servants.

My God, the Father of mercies, to You I look, in You I trust. Bless and sanctify my soul with heavenly benediction, so that it may become Your holy dwelling and the seat of Your eternal glory. And in this temple of Your dignity let nothing be found that might offend Your majesty. In Your great goodness, and in the multitude of Your mercies, look upon me and listen to the prayer of Your poor servant exiled from You in the region of the shadow of death. Protect and preserve the soul of Your poor servant among the many dangers of this corruptible life, and direct him by Your accompanying grace, through the ways of peace, to the land of everlasting light.



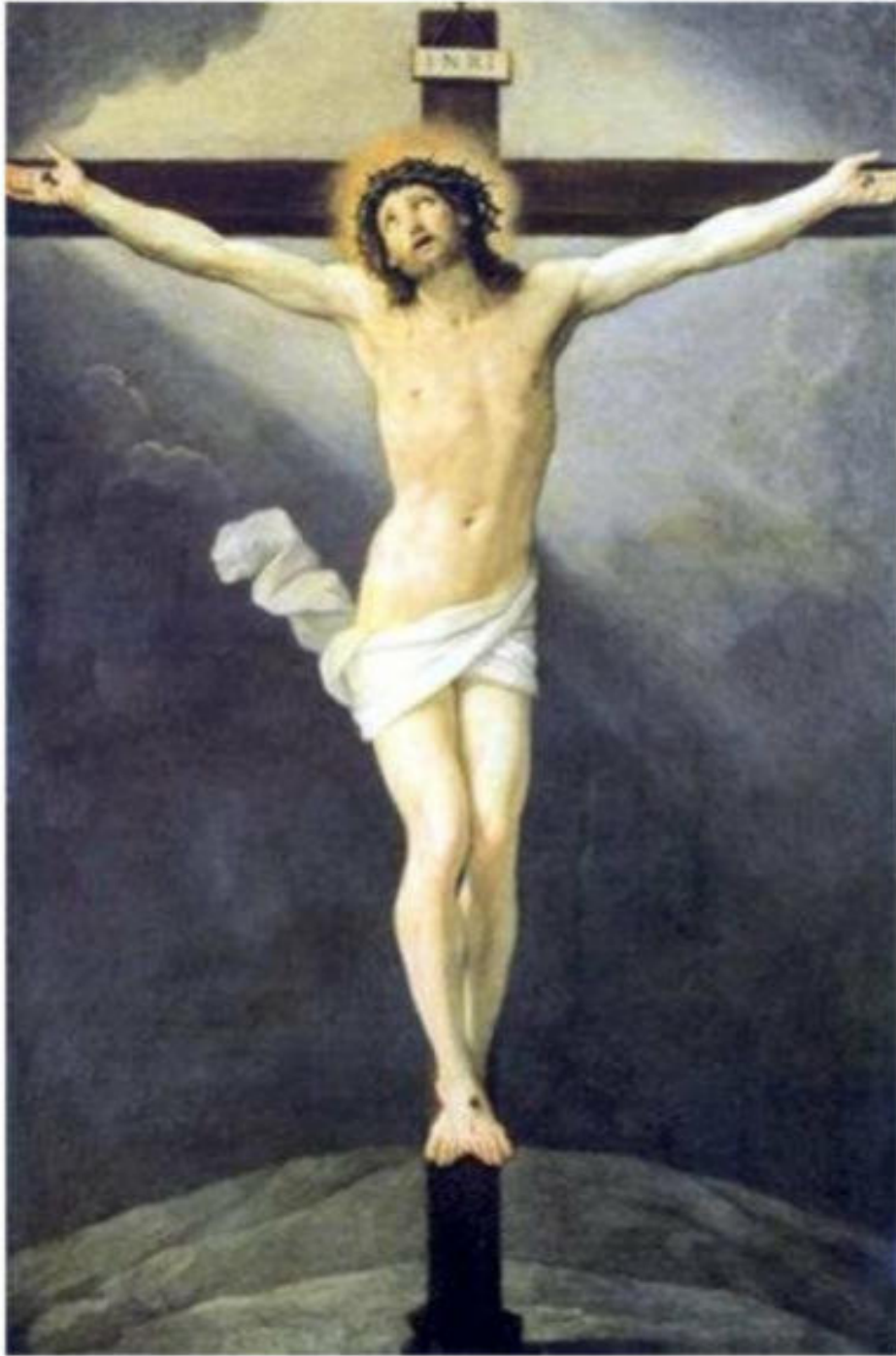
ECCE HOMO "BEHOLD THE MAN"

BOOK FOUR

An Invitation To Holy Communion

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

COME to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.⁴⁵
The bread which I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world.⁴⁶ Take you
and eat: this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you. Do this for the
commemoration of Me.⁴⁷ He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood,
abideth in Me, and I in him.⁴⁸ The words that I have spoken to you are spirit
and life.”⁴⁹



THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST

The First Chapter

The Great Reverence With Which We Should Receive Christ

THE DISCIPLE

THESE are all Your words, O Christ, eternal Truth, though they were not all spoken at one time nor written together in one place. And because they are Yours and true, I must accept them all with faith and gratitude. They are Yours and You have spoken them; they are mine also because You have spoken them for my salvation. Gladly I accept them from Your lips that they may be the more deeply impressed in my heart.

Words of such tenderness, so full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but my sins frighten me and an unclean conscience thunders at me when approaching such great mysteries as these. The sweetness of Your words invites me, but the multitude of my vices oppresses me.

You command me to approach You confidently if I wish to have part with You, and to receive the food of immortality if I desire to obtain life and glory everlasting.

“Come to me,” You say, “all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”⁵⁰

Oh, how sweet and kind to the ear of the sinner is the word by which You, my Lord God, invite the poor and needy to receive Your most holy Body! Who am I, Lord, that I should presume to approach You? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain You, and yet You say: “Come, all of you, to Me.”

What means this most gracious honor and this friendly invitation? How shall I dare to come, I who am conscious of no good on which to presume? How shall I lead You into my house, I who have so often offended in Your most kindly sight? Angels and archangels revere You, the holy and the just fear You, and You say: “Come to Me: all of you!” If You, Lord, had not said it, who would have believed it to be true? And if You had not commanded, who would dare approach?

Behold, Noah, a just man, worked a hundred years building the ark that he and a few others might be saved; how, then, can I prepare myself in one hour to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?

Moses, Your great servant and special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood which he covered with purest gold wherein to place the tables of Your law; shall I, a creature of corruption, dare so easily to receive You, the Maker of law and the Giver of life?

Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, spent seven years building a magnificent temple in praise of Your name, and celebrated its dedication with a feast of eight days. He offered a thousand victims in Your honor and solemnly bore the Ark of the Covenant with trumpeting and jubilation to the place prepared for it; and I, unhappy and poorest of men, how shall I lead You into my house, I who scarcely can spend a half-hour devoutly—would that I could spend even that as I ought!

O my God, how hard these men tried to please You! Alas, how little is all that I do! How short the time I spend in preparing for Communion! I am seldom wholly recollected, and very seldom, indeed, entirely free from distraction. Yet surely in the presence of Your life-giving Godhead no unbecoming thought should arise and no creature possess my heart, for I am about to receive as my guest, not an angel, but the very Lord of angels.

Very great, too, is the difference between the Ark of the Covenant with its treasures and Your most pure Body with its ineffable virtues, between these sacrifices of the law which were but figures of things to come and the true offering of Your Body which was the fulfillment of all ancient sacrifices.

Why, then, do I not long more ardently for Your adorable presence? Why do I not prepare myself with greater care to receive Your sacred gifts, since those holy patriarchs and prophets of old, as well as kings and princes with all their people, have shown such affectionate devotion for the worship of God?

The most devout King David danced before the ark of God with all his strength as he recalled the benefits once bestowed upon his fathers. He made musical instruments of many kinds. He composed psalms and ordered them sung with joy. He himself often played upon the harp when moved by the grace of the Holy Ghost. He taught the people of Israel to praise God with all their hearts and to raise their voices every day to bless and glorify Him. If such great devotion flourished in those days and such ceremony in praise of God before the Ark of the Covenant, what great devotion ought not I and all

Christian people now show in the presence of this Sacrament; what reverence in receiving the most excellent Body of Christ!

Many people travel far to honor the relics of the saints, marveling at their wonderful deeds and at the building of magnificent shrines. They gaze upon and kiss the sacred relics encased in silk and gold; and behold, You are here present before me on the altar, my God, Saint of saints, Creator of men, and Lord of angels!

Often in looking at such things, men are moved by curiosity, by the novelty of the unseen, and they bear away little fruit for the amendment of their lives, especially when they go from place to place lightly and without true contrition. But here in the Sacrament of the altar You are wholly present, my God, the man Christ Jesus, whence is obtained the full realization of eternal salvation, as often as You are worthily and devoutly received. To this, indeed, we are not drawn by levity, or curiosity, or sensuality, but by firm faith, devout hope, and sincere love.

O God, hidden Creator of the world, how wonderfully You deal with us! How sweetly and graciously You dispose of things with Your elect to whom You offer Yourself to be received in this Sacrament! This, indeed, surpasses all understanding. This in a special manner attracts the hearts of the devout and inflames their love. Your truly faithful servants, who give their whole life to amendment, often receive in Holy Communion the great grace of devotion and love of virtue.

Oh, the wonderful and hidden grace of this Sacrament which only the faithful of Christ understand, which unbelievers and slaves of sin cannot experience! In it spiritual grace is conferred, lost virtue restored, and the beauty, marred by sin, repaired. At times, indeed, its grace is so great that, from the fullness of the devotion, not only the mind but also the frail body feels filled with greater strength.

Nevertheless, our neglect and coldness is much to be deplored and pitied, when we are not moved to receive with greater fervor Christ in Whom is the hope and merit of all who will be saved. He is our sanctification and redemption. He is our consolation in this life and the eternal joy of the blessed in heaven. This being true, it is lamentable that many pay so little heed to the salutary Mystery which fills the heavens with joy and maintains the whole universe in being.

Oh, the blindness and the hardness of the heart of man that does not show more regard for so wonderful a gift, but rather falls into carelessness from its

daily use! If this most holy Sacrament were celebrated in only one place and consecrated by only one priest in the whole world, with what great desire, do you think, would men be attracted to that place, to that priest of God, in order to witness the celebration of the divine Mysteries! But now there are many priests and Mass is offered in many places, that God's grace and love for men may appear the more clearly as the Sacred Communion is spread more widely through the world.

Thanks be to You, Jesus, everlasting Good Shepherd, Who have seen fit to feed us poor exiled people with Your precious Body and Blood, and to invite us with words from Your own lips to partake of these sacred Mysteries: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

The Second Chapter

God's Great Goodness and Love is Shown to Man in This Sacrament

THE DISCIPLE

TRUSTING in Your goodness and great mercy, O Lord, I come as one sick to the Healer, as one hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of life, as one in need to the King of heaven, a servant to his Lord, a creature to his Creator, a soul in desolation to my gentle Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that You should come to me? Who am I that You should offer Yourself to me? How dares the sinner to appear in Your presence, and You, how do You condescend to come to the sinner? You know Your servant, and You know that he has nothing good in him that You should grant him this.

I confess, therefore, my unworthiness. I acknowledge Your goodness. I praise Your mercy, and give thanks for Your immense love. For it is because of Yourself that You do it, not for any merit of mine; so that Your goodness may be better known to me, that greater love may be aroused and more perfect humility born in me. Since, then, this pleases You and You have so willed it, Your graciousness pleases me also. Oh, that my sinfulness may not stand in the way!

O most sweet and merciful Jesus, what great reverence, thanks, and never-ending praise are due to You for our taking of Your sacred body, whose dignity no man can express!

But on what shall I think in this Communion, this approach to my Lord, Whom I can never reverence as I ought, and yet Whom I desire devoutly to receive? What thought better, more helpful to me than to humble myself entirely in Your presence and exalt Your infinite goodness above myself?

I praise You, my God, and extol You forever! I despise myself and cast myself before You in the depths of my unworthiness. Behold, You are the

Holy of holies, and I the scum of sinners! Behold, You bow down to me who am not worthy to look up to You! Behold, You come to me! You will to be with me! You invite me to Your banquet! You desire to give me heavenly food, the Bread of Angels to eat, none other than Yourself, the living Bread Who are come down from heaven and give life to the world.

Behold, whence love proceeds! What condescension shines forth! What great thanks and praise are due You for these gifts! Oh, how salutary and profitable was Your design in this institution! How sweet and pleasant the banquet when You gave Yourself as food!

How admirable is Your work, O Lord! How great Your power! How infallible Your truth! For You spoke and all things were made, and this, which You commanded, was done. It is a wonderful thing, worthy of faith, overpowering human understanding, that You, O Lord, my God, true God and man, are contained whole and entire under the appearance of a little bread and wine, and without being consumed are eaten by him who receives You!

You, the Lord of the universe, Who have need of nothing, have willed to dwell in us by means of Your Sacrament. Keep my heart and body clean, so that with a joyous and spotless conscience I may be able often to celebrate Your Mysteries and to receive for my eternal salvation what You have ordained and instituted for Your special honor and as an everlasting memorial.

Rejoice, my soul, and give thanks to God for having left you so noble a gift and so special a consolation in this valley of tears. As often as you renew this Mystery and receive the Body of Christ, so often do you enact the work of redemption and become a sharer in all the merits of Christ, for the love of Christ never grows less and the wealth of His mercy is never exhausted.

Therefore, you should prepare yourself for it by constantly renewing your heart and pondering deeply the great mystery of salvation. As often as you celebrate or hear Mass, it should seem as great, as new, as sweet to you as if on that very day Christ became man in the womb of the Virgin, or, hanging on the Cross, suffered and died for the salvation of man.

The Third Chapter

It Is Profitable to Receive Communion Often

THE DISCIPLE

BEHOLD, I come to You, Lord, that I may prosper by Your gift and be delighted at Your holy banquet which You, O God, in Your sweetness have prepared for Your poor. Behold, all that I can or ought to desire is in You. You are my salvation and my redemption, my hope and strength, my honor and glory.

Gladden, then, this day the soul of Your servant because I have raised my heart to You, O Lord Jesus. I long to receive You now, devoutly and reverently. I desire to bring You into my house that, with Zacheus, I may merit Your blessing and be numbered among the children of Abraham.

My soul longs for Your Body; my heart desires to be united with You. Give me Yourself—it is enough; for without You there is no consolation. Without You I cannot exist, without Your visitation I cannot live. I must often come to You, therefore, and receive the strength of my salvation lest, deprived of this heavenly food, I grow weak on the way. Once, most merciful Jesus, while preaching to the people and healing their many ills, You said: “I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.”⁵¹ Deal with me likewise, You Who have left Yourself in this Sacrament for the consolation of the faithful. You are sweet refreshment to the soul, and he who eats You worthily will be a sharer in, and an heir to, eternal glory.

It is indeed necessary for me, who fall and sin so often, who so quickly become lax and weak, to renew, cleanse, and inflame myself through frequent prayer, confession, and the holy reception of Your Body, lest perhaps by abstaining too long, I fall away from my holy purpose. For from the days of his youth the senses of man are prone to evil, and unless divine aid strengthens him, he quickly falls deeper. But Holy Communion removes him from evil and confirms him in good.

If I am so often careless and lax when I celebrate or communicate, what would happen if I did not receive this remedy and seek so great a help? Although I am neither fit nor properly disposed to celebrate every day, yet I will do my best at proper times to receive the divine Mysteries and share in this great grace. This, indeed, is the one chief consolation of the faithful soul when separated from You by mortality, that often mindful of her God, she receives her Beloved with devout recollection.

Oh, wonderful condescension of Your affection toward us, that You, the Lord God, Creator and Giver of life to all, should see fit to come to a poor soul and to appease her hunger with all Your divinity and humanity! O happy mind and blessed soul which deserves to receive You, her Lord God, and in receiving You, is filled with spiritual joy! How great a Master she entertains, what a beloved guest she receives, how sweet a companion she welcomes, how true a friend she gains, how beautiful and noble is the spouse she embraces, beloved and desired above all things that can be loved and desired! Let heaven and earth and all their treasures stand silent before Your face, most sweetly Beloved, for whatever glory and beauty they have is of Your condescending bounty, and they cannot approach the beauty of Your name, Whose wisdom is untold.

The Fourth Chapter

Many Blessings Are Given Those Who Receive Communion Worthily

THE DISCIPLE

O LORD my God, favor Your servant with the blessings of Your sweetness that I may merit to approach Your magnificent Sacrament worthily and devoutly. Lift up my heart to You and take away from me this heavy indolence. Visit me with Your saving grace that I may in spirit taste Your sweetness which lies hidden in this Sacrament like water in the depths of a spring. Enlighten my eyes to behold this great Mystery, and give me strength to believe in it with firm faith.

For it is Your work, not the power of man, Your sacred institution, not his invention. No man is able of himself to comprehend and understand these things which surpass even the keen vision of angels. How, then, shall I, an unworthy sinner who am but dust and ashes, be able to fathom and understand so great a mystery?

O Lord, I come to You at Your command in simplicity of heart, in good, firm faith, with hope and reverence, and I truly believe that You are present here in this Sacrament, God and man. It is Your will that I receive You and unite myself to You in love. Wherefore, I beg Your mercy and ask that special grace be given me, that I may be wholly dissolved in You and filled with Your love, no longer to concern myself with exterior consolations. For this, the highest and most worthy Sacrament, is the health of soul and body, the cure of every spiritual weakness. In it my defects are remedied, my passions restrained, and temptations overcome or allayed. In it greater grace is infused, growing virtue is nourished, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and charity fanned into flame.

You, my God, the protector of my soul, the strength of human weakness, and the giver of every interior consolation, have given and still do often give

in this Sacrament great gifts to Your loved ones who communicate devoutly. Moreover, You give them many consolations amid their numerous troubles and lift them from the depths of dejection to the hope of Your protection. With new graces You cheer and lighten them within, so that they who are full of anxiety and without affection before Communion may find themselves changed for the better after partaking of this heavenly food and drink.

Likewise, You so deal with Your elect that they may truly acknowledge and plainly experience how weak they are in themselves and what goodness and grace they obtain from You. For though in themselves they are cold, obdurate, and wanting in devotion, through You they become fervent, cheerful, and devout.

Who, indeed, can humbly approach the fountain of sweetness and not carry away a little of it? Or who, standing before a blazing fire does not feel some of its heat? You are a fountain always filled with superabundance! You are a fire, ever burning, that never fails!

Therefore, while I may not exhaust the fullness of the fountain or drink to satiety, yet will I put my lips to the mouth of this heavenly stream that from it I may receive at least some small drop to refresh my thirst and not wither away. And if I cannot as yet be all heavenly or as full of fire as the cherubim and seraphim, yet I will try to become more devout and prepare my heart so that I may gather some small spark of divine fire from the humble reception of this life-giving Sacrament.

Whatever is wanting in me, good Jesus, Savior most holy, do You in Your kindness and grace supply for me, You Who have been pleased to call all unto You, saying: "Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you."

I, indeed, labor in the sweat of my brow. I am torn with sorrow of heart. I am laden with sin, troubled with temptations, enmeshed and oppressed by many evil passions, and there is none to help me, none to deliver and save me but You, my Lord God and Savior, to Whom I entrust myself and all I have, that You may protect me and lead me to eternal life. For the honor and glory of Your name receive me, You Who have prepared Your Body and Blood as food and drink for me. Grant, O Lord, my God and Savior, that by approaching Your Mysteries frequently, the zeal of my devotion may increase.

The Fifth Chapter

The Dignity of the Sacrament and of the Priesthood

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

HAD you the purity of an angel and the sanctity of St. John the Baptist, you would not be worthy to receive or administer this Sacrament. It is not because of any human meriting that a man consecrates and administers the Sacrament of Christ, and receives the Bread of Angels for his food. Great is the Mystery and great the dignity of priests to whom is given that which has not been granted the angels. For priests alone, rightly ordained in the Church, have power to celebrate Mass and consecrate the Body of Christ.

The priest, indeed, is the minister of God, using the word of God according to His command and appointment. God, moreover, is there—the chief Author and invisible Worker to Whom all is subject as He wills, to Whom all are obedient as He commands.

In this most excellent Sacrament, therefore, you ought to believe in God rather than in your own senses or in any visible sign, and thus, with fear and reverence draw near to such a work as this. Look to yourself and see whose ministry has been given you through the imposition of the bishop's hands.

Behold, you have been made a priest, consecrated to celebrate Mass! See to it now that you offer sacrifice to God faithfully and devoutly at proper times, and that you conduct yourself blamelessly. You have not made your burden lighter. Instead, you are now bound by stricter discipline and held to more perfect sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues and show the example of a good life to others. His way lies not among the vulgar and common habits of men but with the angels in heaven and the perfect men on earth. A priest clad in the sacred vestments acts in Christ's place, that he may pray to God both for himself and for all people in a suppliant and humble manner. He has before and behind him the sign of the Lord's cross that he may always

remember the Passion of Christ. It is before him, on the chasuble, that he may look closely upon the footsteps of Christ and try to follow them fervently. It is behind him—he is signed with it—that he may gladly suffer for God any adversities inflicted by others.

He wears the cross before him that he may mourn his own sins, behind him, that in pity he may mourn the sins of others, and know that he is appointed to stand between God and the sinner, never to become weary of prayer and the holy offering until it is granted him to obtain grace and mercy.

When the priest celebrates Mass, he honors God, gladdens the angels, strengthens the Church, helps the living, brings rest to the departed, and wins for himself a share in all good things.

The Sixth Chapter

An Inquiry on the Proper Thing to Do Before Communion

THE DISCIPLE

WHEN I consider Your dignity, O Lord, and my own meanness, I become very much frightened and confused. For if I do not receive, I fly from Life, and if I intrude unworthily, I incur Your displeasure. What, then, shall I do, my God, my Helper and Adviser in necessity? Teach me the right way. Place before me some short exercise suitable for Holy Communion, for it is good to know in what manner I ought to make my heart ready devoutly and fervently for You, to receive Your Sacrament for the good of my soul, or even to celebrate so great and divine a sacrifice.

The Seventh Chapter

The Examination of Conscience and the Resolution to Amend

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

ABOVE all, God's priest should approach the celebration and reception of this Sacrament with the deepest humility of heart and suppliant reverence, with complete faith and the pious intention of giving honor to God.

Carefully examine your conscience, then. Cleanse and purify it to the best of your power by true contrition and humble confession, that you may have no burden, know of no remorse, and thus be free to come near. Let the memory of all your sins grieve you, and especially lament and bewail your daily transgressions. Then if time permits, confess to God in the secret depths of your heart all the miseries your passions have caused.

Lament and grieve because you are still so worldly, so carnal, so passionate and unmortified, so full of roving lust, so careless in guarding the external senses, so often occupied in many vain fancies, so inclined to exterior things and so heedless of what lies within, so prone to laughter and dissipation and so indisposed to sorrow and tears, so inclined to ease and the pleasures of the flesh and so cool to austerity and zeal, so curious to hear what is new and to see the beautiful and so slow to embrace humiliation and dejection, so covetous of abundance, so niggardly in giving and so tenacious in keeping, so inconsiderate in speech, so reluctant in silence, so undisciplined in character, so disordered in action, so greedy at meals, so deaf to the Word of God, so prompt to rest and so slow to labor, so awake to empty conversation, so sleepy in keeping sacred vigils and so eager to end them, so wandering in your attention, so careless in saying the office, so lukewarm in celebrating, so heartless in receiving, so quickly distracted, so seldom fully recollected, so quickly moved to anger, so apt to take offense at others, so prone to judge, so severe in condemning, so happy in prosperity and so weak in adversity, so often making good resolutions and carrying so

few of them into action.

When you have confessed and deplored these and other faults with sorrow and great displeasure because of your weakness, be firmly determined to amend your life day by day and to advance in goodness. Then, with complete resignation and with your entire will offer yourself upon the altar of your heart as an everlasting sacrifice to the honor of My name, by entrusting with faith both body and soul to My care, that thus you may be considered worthy to draw near and offer sacrifice to God and profitably receive the Sacrament of My Body. For there is no more worthy offering, no greater satisfaction for washing away sin than to offer yourself purely and entirely to God with the offering of the Body of Christ in Mass and Communion.

If a man does what he can and is truly penitent, however often he comes to Me for grace and pardon, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live”;⁵² I will no longer remember his sins, but all will be forgiven him.

The Eighth Chapter

The Offering of Christ on the Cross; Our Offering

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

AS I offered Myself willingly to God the Father for your sins with hands outstretched and body naked on the cross, so that nothing remained in Me that had not become a complete sacrifice to appease the divine wrath, so ought you to be willing to offer yourself to Me day by day in the Mass as a pure and holy oblation, together with all your faculties and affections, with as much inward devotion as you can.

What more do I ask than that you give yourself entirely to Me? I care not for anything else you may give Me, for I seek not your gift but you. Just as it would not be enough for you to have everything if you did not have Me, so whatever you give cannot please Me if you do not give yourself.

Offer yourself to Me, therefore, and give yourself entirely for God—your offering will be accepted. Behold, I offered Myself wholly to the Father for you, I even gave My whole Body and Blood for food that I might be all yours, and you Mine forever.

But if you rely upon self, and do not offer your free will to Mine, your offering will be incomplete and the union between us imperfect. Hence, if you desire to attain grace and freedom of heart, let the free offering of yourself into the hands of God precede your every action. This is why so few are inwardly free and enlightened—they know not how to renounce themselves entirely.

My word stands: “Everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple.”⁵³

If, therefore, you wish to be My disciple, offer yourself to Me with all your heart.

The Ninth Chapter

We Should Offer Ourselves and All That We Have to God, Praying for All

THE DISCIPLE

ALL things in heaven and on earth, O Lord, are Yours. I long to give myself to You as a voluntary offering to remain forever Yours. With a sincere heart I offer myself this day to You, O Lord, to Your eternal service, to Your homage, and as a sacrifice of everlasting praise. Receive me with this holy offering of Your precious Body which also I make to You this day, in the presence of angels invisibly attending, for my salvation and that of all Your people.

O Lord, upon Your altar of expiation, I offer You all the sins and offenses I have committed in Your presence and in the presence of Your holy angels, from the day when I first could sin until this hour, that You may burn and consume them all in the fire of Your love, that You may wipe away their every stain, cleanse my conscience of every fault, and restore to me Your grace which I lost in sin by granting full pardon for all and receiving me mercifully with the kiss of peace.

What can I do for all my sins but humbly confess and lament them, and implore Your mercy without ceasing? In Your mercy, I implore You, hear me when I stand before You, my God. All my sins are most displeasing to me. I wish never to commit them again. I am sorry for them and will be sorry as long as I live. I am ready to do penance and make satisfaction to the utmost of my power.

Forgive me, O God, forgive me my sins for Your Holy Name. Save my soul which You have redeemed by Your most precious Blood. See, I place myself at Your mercy. I commit myself to Your hands. Deal with me according to Your goodness, not according to my malicious and evil ways.

I offer to You also all the good I have, small and imperfect though it be,

that You may make it more pure and more holy, that You may be pleased with it, render it acceptable to Yourself, and perfect it more and more, and finally that You may lead me, an indolent and worthless creature, to a good and happy end.

I offer You also all the holy desires of Your devoted servants, the needs of my parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all who are dear to me; of all who for Your sake have been kind to me or to others; of all who have wished and asked my prayers and Masses for them and theirs, whether they yet live in the flesh or are now departed from this world, that they may all experience the help of Your grace, the strength of Your consolation, protection from dangers, deliverance from punishment to come, and that, free from all evils, they may gladly give abundant thanks to You.

I offer You also these prayers and the Sacrifice of Propitiation for those especially who have in any way injured, saddened, or slandered me, inflicted loss or pain upon me, and also for all those whom I have at any time saddened, disturbed, offended, and abused by word or deed, willfully or in ignorance. May it please You to forgive us all alike our sins and offenses against one another.

Take away from our hearts, O Lord, all suspicion, anger, wrath, contention, and whatever may injure charity and lessen brotherly love. Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those who ask Your mercy, give grace to those who need it, and make us such that we may be worthy to enjoy Your favor and gain eternal life.

The Tenth Chapter

Do Not Lightly Forego Holy Communion

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

YOU must often return to the source of grace and divine mercy, to the fountain of goodness and perfect purity, if you wish to be free from passion and vice, if you desire to be made stronger and more watchful against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The enemy, knowing the great good and the healing power of Holy Communion, tries as much as he can by every manner and means to hinder and keep away the faithful and the devout. Indeed, there are some who suffer the worst assaults of Satan when disposing themselves to prepare for Holy Communion. As it is written in Job, this wicked spirit comes among the sons of God to trouble them by his wonted malice, to make them unduly fearful and perplexed, that thus he may lessen their devotion or attack their faith to such an extent that they perhaps either forego Communion altogether or receive with little fervor.

No attention, however, must be paid to his cunning wiles, no matter how base and horrible—all his suggestions must be cast back upon his head. The wretch is to be despised and scorned. Holy Communion must not be passed by because of any assaults from him or because of the commotion he may arouse.

Oftentimes, also, too great solicitude for devotion and anxiety about confession hinder a person. Do as wise men do. Cast off anxiety and scruple, for it impedes the grace of God and destroys devotion of the mind.

Do not remain away from Holy Communion because of a small trouble or vexation but go at once to confession and willingly forgive all others their offenses. If you have offended anyone, humbly seek pardon and God will readily forgive you.

What good is it to delay confession for a long time or to put off Holy

Communion? Cleanse yourself at once, spit out the poison quickly. Make haste to apply the remedy and you will find it better than if you had waited a long time. If you put it off today because of one thing, perhaps tomorrow a greater will occur to you, and thus you will stay away from Communion for a long time and become even more unfit.

Shake off this heaviness and sloth as quickly as you can, for there is no gain in much anxiety, in enduring long hours of trouble, and in depriving yourself of the divine Mysteries because of these daily disturbances. Yes, it is very hurtful to defer Holy Communion long, for it usually brings on a lazy spiritual sleep.

How sad that some dissolute and lax persons are willing to postpone confession and likewise wish to defer Holy Communion, lest they be forced to keep a stricter watch over themselves! Alas, how little love and devotion have they who so easily put off Holy Communion!

How happy and acceptable to God is he who so lives, and keeps his conscience so pure, as to be ready and well disposed to communicate, even every day if he were permitted, and if he could do so unnoticed.

If, now and then, a man abstains by the grace of humility or for a legitimate reason, his reverence is commendable, but if laziness takes hold of him, he must arouse himself and do everything in his power, for the Lord will quicken his desire because of the good intention to which He particularly looks. When he is indeed unable to come, he will always have the good will and pious intention to communicate and thus he will not lose the fruit of the Sacrament.

Any devout person may at any hour on any day receive Christ in spiritual communion profitably and without hindrance. Yet on certain days and times appointed he ought to receive with affectionate reverence the Body of his Redeemer in this Sacrament, seeking the praise and honor of God rather than his own consolation.

For as often as he devoutly calls to mind the mystery and passion of the Incarnate Christ, and is inflamed with love for Him, he communicates mystically and is invisibly refreshed.

He who prepares himself only when festivals approach or custom demands, will often find himself unprepared. Blessed is he who offers himself a sacrifice to the Lord as often as he celebrates or communicates.

Be neither too slow nor too fast in celebrating but follow the good custom common to those among whom you are. You ought not to cause others

inconvenience or trouble, but observe the accepted rule as laid down by superiors, and look to the benefit of others rather than to your own devotion or inclination.

The Eleventh Chapter

The Body of Christ and Sacred Scripture Are Most Necessary to a Faithful Soul

THE DISCIPLE

O MOST sweet Lord Jesus, how great is the happiness of the devout soul that feasts upon You at Your banquet, where there is set before her to be eaten no other food but Yourself alone, her only Lover, most desired of all that her heart can desire!

To me it would be happiness, indeed, to shed tears in Your presence from the innermost depths of love, and like the pious Magdalen to wash Your feet with them. But where now is this devotion, this copious shedding of holy tears? Certainly in Your sight, before Your holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and weep for joy. For, hidden though You are beneath another form, I have You truly present in the Sacrament.

My eyes could not bear to behold You in Your own divine brightness, nor could the whole world stand in the splendor of the glory of Your majesty. In veiling Yourself in the Sacrament, therefore, You have regard for my weakness.

In truth, I possess and adore Him Whom the angels adore in heaven—I as yet by faith, they face to face unveiled. I must be content with the light of the true faith and walk in it until the day of eternal brightness dawns and the shadow of figures passes away. When, moreover, that which is perfect shall have come, the need of sacraments shall cease, for the blessed in heavenly glory need no healing sacrament. Rejoicing endlessly in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face, transformed from their own brightness to the brightness of the ineffable Deity, they taste the Word of God made flesh, as He was in the beginning and will remain in eternity.

Though mindful of these wonderful things, every spiritual solace becomes wearisome to me because so long as I do not plainly see the Lord in His

glory, I consider everything I hear and see on earth of little account.

You are my witness, O God, that nothing can comfort me, no creature give me rest but You, my God, Whom I desire to contemplate forever. But this is not possible while I remain in mortal life, and, therefore, I must be very patient and submit myself to You in every desire.

Even Your saints, O Lord, who now rejoice with You in the kingdom of heaven, awaited the coming of Your glory with faith and great patience while they lived. What they believed, I believe. What they hoped for, I hope for, and whither they arrived, I trust I shall come by Your grace. Meanwhile I will walk in faith, strengthened by the example of the saints. I shall have, besides, for comfort and for the guidance of my life, the holy Books, and above all these, Your most holy Body for my special haven and refuge.

I feel there are especially necessary for me in this life two things without which its miseries would be unbearable. Confined here in this prison of the body I confess I need these two, food and light. Therefore, You have given me in my weakness Your sacred Flesh to refresh my soul and body, and You have set Your word as the guiding light for my feet. Without them I could not live aright, for the word of God is the light of my soul and Your Sacrament is the Bread of Life.

These also may be called the two tables, one here, one there, in the treasure house of holy Church. One is the table of the holy altar, having the holy Bread that is the precious Body of Christ. The other is the table of divine law, containing holy doctrine that teaches all the true faith and firmly leads them within the veil, the Holy of holies.

Thanks to You, Lord Jesus, Light of eternal light, for the table of Your holy teaching which You have prepared for us by Your servants, the prophets and Apostles and other learned men.

Thanks to You, Creator and Redeemer of men, Who, to declare Your love to all the world, have prepared a great supper in which You have placed before us as food not the lamb, the type of Yourself, but Your own most precious Body and Blood, making all the faithful glad in Your sacred banquet, intoxicating them with the chalice of salvation in which are all the delights of paradise; and the holy angels feast with us but with more happiness and sweetness.

Oh, how great and honorable is the office of the priest, to whom is given the consecration of the Lord of majesty in sacred words, whose lips bless Him, whose hands hold Him, whose tongue receives Him, and whose

ministry it is to bring Him to others!

Oh, how clean those hands should be, how pure the lips, how sanctified the body, how immaculate the heart of the priest to whom the Author of all purity so often comes. No word but what is holy, none but what is good and profitable ought to come from the lips of the priest who so often receives the Sacrament of Christ. Single and modest should be the eyes accustomed to looking upon the Body of Christ. Pure and lifted up to heaven the hands accustomed to handle the Creator of heaven and earth. To priests above all it is written in the law: "Be ye holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy."

Let Your grace, almighty God, assist us, that we who have undertaken the office of the priesthood may serve You worthily and devoutly in all purity and with a good conscience. And if we cannot live as innocently as we ought, grant us at least to lament duly the wrongs we have committed and in the spirit of humility and the purpose of a good will to serve You more fervently in the future.

The Twelfth Chapter

The Communicant Should Prepare Himself for Christ with Great Care

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

I AM the Lover of purity, the Giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart and there is the place of My rest.

Prepare for Me a large room furnished and I with My disciples will keep the Pasch with you.

If you wish that I come to you and remain with you, purge out the old leaven and make clean the dwelling of your heart. Shut out the whole world with all the din of its vices. Sit as the sparrow lonely on the housetop, and think on your transgressions in bitterness of soul.

Everyone who loves prepares the best and most beautiful home for his beloved, because the love of the one receiving his lover is recognized thereby.

But understand that you cannot by any merit of your own make this preparation well enough, though you spend a year in doing it and think of nothing else. It is only by My goodness and grace that you are allowed to approach My table, as though a beggar were invited to dinner by a rich man and he had nothing to offer in return for the gift but to humble himself and give thanks.

Do what you can and do that carefully. Receive the Body of the Lord, your beloved God Who deigns to come to you, not out of habit or necessity, but with fear, with reverence, and with love.

I am He that called you. I ordered it done. I will supply what you lack. Come and receive Me.

When I grant the grace of devotion, give thanks to God, not because you are worthy but because I have had mercy upon you. If you have it not and feel rather dry instead, continue in prayer, sigh and knock, and do not give up

until you receive some crumb of saving grace.

You have need of Me. I do not need you. You do not come to sanctify Me but I come to sanctify you and make you better. You come to be sanctified and united with Me, to receive new grace and to be aroused anew to amend. Do not neglect this grace, but prepare your heart with all care, and bring into it your Beloved.

Not only should you prepare devoutly before Communion, but you should also carefully keep yourself in devotion after receiving the Sacrament. The careful custody of yourself afterward is no less necessary than the devout preparation before, for a careful afterwatch is the best preparation for obtaining greater grace. If a person lets his mind wander to external comforts, he becomes quite indisposed.

Beware of much talking. Remain in seclusion and enjoy your God, for you have Him Whom all the world cannot take from you.

I am He to Whom you should give yourself entirely, that from now on you may live, not in yourself, but in Me, with all cares cast away.

The Thirteenth Chapter

With All Her Heart the Devout Soul Should Desire Union with Christ in the Sacrament

THE DISCIPLE

LET it be granted me to find You alone, O Christ, to open to You my whole heart, to enjoy You as my soul desires, to be disturbed by no one, to be moved and troubled by no creature, that You may speak to me and I to You alone, as a lover speaks to his loved one, and friend converses with friend.

I pray for this, I desire this, that I may be completely united to You and may withdraw my heart from all created things, learning to relish the celestial and the eternal through Holy Communion and the frequent celebration of Mass.

Ah Lord God, when shall I be completely united to You and absorbed by You, with self utterly forgotten? You in me and I in You? Grant that we may remain so together. You in truth are my Beloved, chosen from thousands, in Whom my soul is happy to dwell all the days of her life. You are in truth my pledge of peace, in Whom is the greatest peace and true rest, without Whom there is toil and sorrow and infinite misery.

You truly are the hidden God. Your counsel is not with the wicked, and Your conversation is rather with the humble and the simple.

O how kind is Your spirit, Lord, Who in order to show Your sweetness toward Your children, deign to feed them with the sweetest of bread, bread come down from heaven! Surely there is no other people so fortunate as to have their god near them, as You, our God, are present everywhere to the faithful, to whom You give Yourself to be eaten and enjoyed for their daily solace and the raising of their hearts to heaven.

Indeed, what other nation is so renowned as the Christian peoples? What creature under heaven is so favored as the devout soul to whom God comes, to feed her with His glorious Flesh? O unspeakable grace! O wonderful

condescension! O love beyond measure, singularly bestowed upon man!

What return shall I make to the Lord for this love, this grace so boundless? There is nothing I can give more pleasing than to offer my heart completely to my God, uniting it closely with His. Then shall all my inner self be glad when my soul is perfectly united with God. Then will He say to me: "If you will be with Me, I will be with you." And I will answer Him: "Deign, O Lord, to remain with me. I will gladly be with You. This is my one desire, that my heart may be united with You."

The Fourteenth Chapter

The Ardent Longing of Devout Men for the Body of Christ

THE DISCIPLE

HOW great is the abundance of Your kindness, O Lord, which You have hidden from those who fear You!

When I think how some devout persons come to Your Sacrament with the greatest devotion and love, I am frequently ashamed and confused that I approach Your altar and the table of Holy Communion so coldly and indifferently; that I remain so dry and devoid of heartfelt affection; that I am not completely inflamed in Your presence, O my God, nor so strongly drawn and attracted as many devout persons who, in their great desire for Communion and intense heart love, could not restrain their tears but longed from the depths of their souls and bodies to embrace You, the Fountain of Life. These were able to appease and allay their hunger in no other way than by receiving Your Body with all joy and spiritual eagerness. The faith of these men was true and ardent—convincing proof of Your sacred presence. They whose hearts burn so ardently within them when Jesus lives with them truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread.

Such affection and devotion, such mighty love and zeal are often far beyond me. Be merciful to me, O sweet, good, kind Jesus, and grant me, Your poor suppliant, sometimes at least to feel in Holy Communion a little of the tenderness of Your love, that my faith may grow stronger, that my hope in Your goodness may increase, and that charity, once perfectly kindled within me by tasting heavenly manna, may never fail.

Your mercy can give me the grace I long for and can visit me most graciously with fervor of soul according to Your good pleasure. For although I am not now inflamed with as great desire as those who are singularly devoted to You, yet by Your grace I long for this same great flame, praying and seeking a place among all such ardent lovers that I may be numbered

among their holy company.

The Fifteenth Chapter

The Grace of Devotion is Acquired Through Humility and Self-Denial

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

YOU must seek earnestly the grace of devotion, ask for it fervently, await it patiently and hopefully, receive it gratefully, guard it humbly, cooperate with it carefully and leave to God, when it comes, the length and manner of the heavenly visitation.

When you feel little or no inward devotion, you should especially humiliate yourself, but do not become too dejected or unreasonably sad. In one short moment God often gives what He has long denied. At times He grants at the end what He has denied from the beginning of prayer. If grace were always given at once, or were present at our beck and call, it would not be well taken by weak humankind. Therefore, with good hope and humble patience await the grace of devotion.

When it is not given, or for some unknown reason is taken away, blame yourself and your sins. Sometimes it is a small matter that hinders grace and hides it, if, indeed, that which prevents so great a good may be called little rather than great. But if you remove this hindrance, be it great or small, and if you conquer it perfectly, you shall have what you ask. As soon as you have given yourself to God with all your heart and seek neither this nor that for your own pleasure and purpose, but place yourself completely in His charge, you shall find yourself at peace, united with Him, because nothing will be so sweet, nothing will please you so much as the good pleasure of His will.

Anyone, therefore, who shall with simplicity of heart direct his intention to God and free himself from all inordinate love or dislike for any creature will be most fit to receive grace and will be worthy of the gift of devotion. For where the Lord finds the vessel empty He pours down His blessing.

So also the more perfectly a man renounces things of this world, and the

more completely he dies to himself through contempt of self, the more quickly this great grace comes to him, the more plentifully it enters in, and the higher it uplifts the free heart.

Then shall he see and abound, then shall his heart marvel and be enlarged within him, because the Hand of the Lord is with him and in the hollow of that Hand he has placed himself forever. Thus shall the man be blessed who seeks God with all his heart and has not regarded his soul in vain. Such a one, receiving the Holy Eucharist, merits the grace of divine union because he looks not on his own thoughts, nor to his own comfort, but above all devotion and consolation to the glory and honor of God.

The Sixteenth Chapter

We Should Show Our Needs to Christ and Ask His Grace

THE DISCIPLE

O MOST kind, most loving Lord, Whom I now desire to receive with devotion, You know the weakness and the necessity which I suffer, in what great evils and vices I am involved, how often I am depressed, tempted, defiled, and troubled.

To You I come for help, to You I pray for comfort and relief. I speak to Him Who knows all things, to Whom my whole inner life is manifest, and Who alone can perfectly comfort and help me.

You know what good things I am most in need of and how poor I am in virtue. Behold I stand before You, poor and naked, asking Your grace and imploring Your mercy.

Feed Your hungry beggar. Inflame my coldness with the fire of Your love. Enlighten my blindness with the brightness of Your presence. Turn all earthly things to bitterness for me, all grievance and adversity to patience, all lowly creation to contempt and oblivion. Raise my heart to You in heaven and suffer me not to wander on earth. From this moment to all eternity do You alone grow sweet to me, for You alone are my food and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and my total good.

Let Your presence wholly inflame me, consume and transform me into Yourself, that I may become one spirit with You by the grace of inward union and by the melting power of Your ardent love.

Suffer me not to go from You fasting and thirsty, but deal with me mercifully as You have so often and so wonderfully dealt with Your saints.

What wonder if I were completely inflamed by You to die to myself, since You are the fire ever burning and never dying, a love purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding.

The Seventeenth Chapter

The Burning Love and Strong Desire to Receive Christ

THE DISCIPLE

WITH greatest devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervor of heart I wish to receive You, O Lord, as many saints and devout persons, most pleasing to You in their holiness of life and most fervent in devotion, desired You in Holy Communion.

O my God, everlasting love, my final good, my happiness unending, I long to receive You with as strong a desire and as worthy a reverence as any of the saints ever had or could have felt, and though I am not worthy to have all these sentiments of devotion, still I offer You the full affection of my heart as if I alone had all those most pleasing and ardent desires.

Yet, whatever a God-fearing mind can conceive and desire, I offer in its entirety to You with the greatest reverence and inward affection. I wish to keep nothing for self but to offer to You, willingly and most freely, myself and all that is mine.

O Lord God, my Creator and my Redeemer, I long to receive You this day with such reverence, praise, and honor, with such gratitude, worthiness and love, with such faith, hope, and purity as that with which Your most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, longed for and received You when she humbly and devoutly answered the angel who announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.”⁵⁴

Likewise as Your blessed precursor, the most excellent of saints, John the Baptist, gladdened by Your presence, exulted in the Holy Ghost while yet enclosed in the womb of his mother, and afterward seeing Jesus walking among men, humbled himself and with devout love declared: “The friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom’s voice,”⁵⁵ even so I long to be inflamed with great and holy

desires and to give myself to You with all my heart.

Therefore I offer and present to You the gladness of all devout hearts, their ardent affection, their mental raptures, their supernatural illuminations and heavenly visions together with all the virtues and praises which have been or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and on earth, for myself and all commended to my prayers, that You may be worthily praised and glorified forever.

Accept, O Lord my God, my promises and desires of giving You infinite praise and boundless benediction, which in the vastness of Your ineffable greatness are justly due You. This I render and desire to render every day and every moment of time, and in my loving prayers I invite and entreat all celestial spirits and all the faithful to join me in giving You praise and thanks.

Let all people, races, and tongues praise You and with the greatest joy and most ardent devotion magnify Your sweet and holy name. And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate this most great Sacrament and receive it in the fullness of faith, find kindness and mercy in You and humbly pray for me, a sinner. And when they have received the longed-for devotion and blissful union, and, well consoled and wonderfully refreshed, have retired from Your holy, Your celestial table, may they deign to remember my poor soul.

The Eighteenth Chapter

Man Should Not Scrutinize This Sacrament in Curiosity, But Humbly Imitate Christ and Submit Reason to Holy Faith

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

BEWARE of curious and vain examination of this most profound Sacrament, if you do not wish to be plunged into the depths of doubt. He who scrutinizes its majesty too closely will be overwhelmed by its glory.

God can do more than man can understand. A pious and humble search for truth He will allow, a search that is ever ready to learn and that seeks to walk in the reasonable doctrine of the fathers.

Blest is the simplicity that leaves the difficult way of dispute and goes forward on the level, firm path of God's commandments. Many have lost devotion because they wished to search into things beyond them.

Faith is required of you, and a sincere life, not a lofty intellect nor a delving into the mysteries of God. If you neither know nor understand things beneath you, how can you comprehend what is above you? Submit yourself to God and humble reason to faith, and the light of understanding will be given you so far as it is good and necessary for you. Some are gravely tempted concerning faith and the Sacrament but this disturbance is not laid to them but to the enemy.

Be not disturbed, dispute not in your mind, answer not the doubts sent by the devil, but believe the words of God, believe His saints and prophets and the evil enemy will flee from you. It is often very profitable for the servant of God to suffer such things. For Satan does not tempt unbelievers and sinners whom he already holds securely, but in many ways he does tempt and trouble the faithful servant.

Go forward, then, with sincere and unflinching faith, and with humble reverence approach this Sacrament. Whatever you cannot understand commit to the security of the all-powerful God, Who does not deceive you. The man,

however, who trusts in himself is deceived. God walks with sincere men, reveals Himself to humble men, enlightens the understanding of pure minds, and hides His grace from the curious and the proud.

Human reason is weak and can be deceived. True faith, however, cannot be deceived. All reason and natural science ought to come after faith, not go before it, nor oppose it. For in this most holy and supremely excellent Sacrament, faith and love take precedence and work in a hidden manner.

God, eternal, incomprehensible, and infinitely powerful, does great and inscrutable things in heaven and on earth, and there is no searching into His marvelous works. If all the works of God were such that human reason could easily grasp them, they would not be called wonderful or beyond the power of words to tell.



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¹ Eccles. 1:8.

² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, i. 1.

³ Augustine, *Confessions* V. 4.

⁴ Job 7:1.

⁵ Luke 12:43, 44.

⁶ Ps. 80:9.

⁷ Ps. 34:17.

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¹¹ Isa. 48:22.

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¹³ Isa. 15:6.

¹⁴ John 11:28.

¹⁵ Ps. 29:7—12.

¹⁶ Job 7:18.

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¹⁸ Luke 17:10.

¹⁹ Ps. 24:16.

²⁰ Matt. 16:24.

²¹ Matt. 25:41.

²² Luke 24:46, 26.

²³ Acts 9:16.

²⁴ Luke 9:23.

²⁵ Ps. 84:9.

²⁶ 1 Kings 3:9.

²⁷ Ps. 119:125.

²⁸ Ps. 119:36.

²⁹ Deut. 32:2.

³⁰ Exod. 20:19.

³¹ John 6:68.

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³⁴ Ps. 37:4.

³⁵ Augustine, Confessions, i. 1.

³⁶ John 14:27.

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⁴³ Ps. 19:9.

⁴⁴ Matt. 18:3, 4.

⁴⁵ Matt. 11:28.

⁴⁶ John 6:52.

⁴⁷ 1 Cor. 11:24.

⁴⁸ John 6:57.

⁴⁹ John 6:64.

⁵⁰ Matt. 11:28.

⁵¹ Matt. 15:32.

⁵² Ezek. 33:11.

⁵³ Luke 14:33.

⁵⁴ Luke 1:38.

⁵⁵ John 3:29.

The Promise of Fatima



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*One Hundred Years
of History,
Flystery
and Faith*



Paul F. Caranci

The Promise of Fatima

One Hundred Years of History, Mystery and Faith

Paul F. Caranci



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Researching and writing books can have a transformative effect on the author and my work on this one has created in me a burning desire to not only continue to follow the precepts of Jesus, but to live the message of his Blessed Mother to the children of Fatima as well. My prayer is that this experience will create in me a new devotion to the Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the will to sacrifice for the conversion of sinners, the stamina to pray the Rosary daily for world peace and the grace to make the First Saturday devotions as prescribed by The Lady of The Rosary one hundred years ago.

My thanks to the Very Reverend Robert Webster, Pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church in Clermont, Florida for his contribution to, and support of, this project.

Above all, my continued love and gratitude to my wife Margie for once again serving as my proofreader and sounding board. I know it can be an awful burden to read unfinished works of history, Margie, and I love you for taking the time to read and correct these drafts.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Fatima, for the unwavering love and protection provided me throughout my entire life, even during those times when it may have seemed to me that I walked alone;

To my parents Frank and Anna Caranci who instilled in me from an early age the faith that has sustained me all these years; and,

To Margie and our entire family, specifically our children Heather Anne and Matthew James, and our grandchildren Matthew Jr., Jacob, Vincent and Casey who make all the wonderful things that life offers so much more enjoyable.

Foreword

The world was a very different place one hundred years ago. On May 13, 1917, the first “Great War” was at its most harsh with no end in sight. Even at its conclusion it was not necessarily an end for in just two decades another “Great War” would begin. It was a time of uncertainty and fear. It was also an opportunity for people to reorder their lives.

In a small place called Fatima in Portugal, to three young shepherd children, the Blessed Mother appeared seven times bringing a message of hope and peace to the troubled of heart and to a world in the midst of turmoil.

Now known to us as Our Lady of the Rosary, and with a motherly care for the Universal Church, she implored the world to prayer, reparation from sin, and conversion. The effects of this trifold call to the individual, to the Church, and to the world could make of us a more holy people on the journey to the Kingdom!

While the “Three Secrets” have already been revealed, it is important to remember that we have learned:

1. That hell truly exists
2. That the Great War(s) would come to an end through prayer and devotion to the Lord
3. That there will be times of great trials, persecutions and martyrdoms and among them of a “bishop in white”

And, if these “secrets” be true, we also know:

1. That Heaven really exists!
2. That our prayers can and do have a great effect on the lives of others and can bring about worldly peace
3. And that we have a faith that enables us to endure all

things in the name of the Lord Jesus!

For the message of Fatima always points our hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus, He who is the “way, the truth and the life.” Our lives then are to be directed to Him who brings about peace, satisfaction from our hungers and thirsts, and healing to the world. Thus, we pray the “Fatima Prayer,”

O, my Jesus, forgive us our sins.
Save us from the fires of hell.
Lead all souls to heaven
Especially those most in need of thy mercy!

One hundred years later, on this May 13, 2017, in an uncertain world, the trusting and humble heart hears this message with renewed hope!

Very Reverend Robert Webster
Blessed Sacrament Church
Clermont, Florida



*The Very Reverend Robert E. Webster, author of the Foreword,
meets with Saint Pope John Paul II. The two met in Castel Gandolfo, Italy in 2001.*

A Glossary of Some of the Places and People Important to the Story of Fatima

The Places:

Fatima – A civil parish in the municipality of Ourem, in the Portuguese Santarem District. The parish encompasses several villages and localities of which Fatima is the largest. Fatima is 76 miles north of Lisbon and 116 miles south of Porto. Fatima is located on the Estremenho Limestone Massif, on the flanks of the Serra de Aire, approximately 980 ft. above sea level. It is an arid landscape with rocky ground interspersed with limestone outcroppings. Fatima, Aljustrel and Cova da Iria are three of the twenty-two localities that make up the parish.

Aljustrel – The village within the township of Fatima, Portugal where the three children lived. It is a mountainous region at the center of Portugal.

Chousa Velha – The property owned by Lucia's parents where the apparition of the Angel occurred.

Cova da Iria – Land owned by Lucia's father that is located about a mile and a half northwest of Aljustrel and about ½ mile south of Fatima. This is where Our Lady appeared to the three children.

The Cabeco – The hill where the children played, prayed and sacrificed.

Loca do Cabeco – The cave on the slope of the hill known as the Cabeco. Located to the west, near Aljustrel, Loca do Cabeco, is a smaller agglomeration of rocky outcroppings where, in 1916, an

angel appeared twice to the three children. These apparitions were recounted by Lucia in her memoirs in the 1930s.

Moita – A small village to the north of the Cova da Iria about 1km from the place of the apparitions. It is the village where two poor families lived whose children were fed by the three seers. (pg. 46)

Vila Nova de Ourem – The site of St. Augustine's Hospital where Jacinta was admitted from July 1 to August 31, 1919. Also the site of the Administrator's house where the children were taken after being kidnapped by the Administrator.

Valinhos – The place of the fourth apparition on August 19th, near their little hamlet.^[1]

The People:

Lucia dos Santos – The oldest of the three seers. Lucia was born on March 22, 1907 and was 10 years old at the time of the first apparition on May 13, 1917. She had six brothers and sisters: Maria dos Anjos (1891-1986), Teresa de Jesus Rosa dos Santos, Manuel Rosa dos Santos (1895-1977), Glória de Jesus Rosa dos Santos (1898-1971), Carolina de Jesus Rosa dos Santos (1902-1992), and Maria Rosa (died at birth). Lucia died on February 13, 2005 at the age of 97. (Even though Lúcia's birthday is registered as March 22, 1907, her actual date of birth is March 28. In those days, it was required that parents bring their children for baptism on the eighth day after birth or face a fine, and, because March 30 was a more convenient day, the 22nd was chosen as her birthday. Lúcia later recalled that, at the time, no one attached much importance to one's birthday.)

Antonio dos Santos and **Maria Rosa Ferreira** (1869-1942) – Lucia's father and mother married on 19 November 1890. Although peasants, the Santos family was by no means poor,

owning land "in the direction of Montelo, Our Lady of Ortiga, Fátima, Valinhos, Cabeço, Charneca, and Cova da Iria." (Antonio is also known as Antonio Abobora.)

Jacinta Marto – The youngest of the three seers was born on March 11, 1910 and died on February 20, 1920.

Francisco Marto – Born June 11, 1908 the sixth of seven children. Died April 4, 1919. He was 9 years old at the time of the first apparition on May 13, 1917.

Manuel Pedro Marto – Jacinta & Francisco's father and Lucia's uncle. He died in 1919. **Olimpia Marto** – Mother of Jacinta & Francisco, sister to Antonio dos Santos.

Artur de Oliveira Santos – The Administrator of the district of Vila Nova de Ourem, an anticlerical fanatic who jailed the three children. He died in 1955. Known as the Tinsmith he was a Freemason who enjoyed much power through his position and ruled his district in a tyrannical fashion, imposing restrictions on churches and religious services on his slightest whim.

Fr. Pena – The parish priest from St. Anthony's Church in Aljustrel who denied Lucia the ability to make her First Communion at the age of 6.

Fr. Francisco Cruz, S.J. – 1859-1948, Questioned the children following the apparitions. Father Francisco da Cruz, Servant of God, was born in Alcochete, Setúbal, Portugal, where now a large statue stands in his honor in Revolution Square. He studied at the University of Coimbra and was ordained in 1882. He first taught philosophy in the seminary of Santarém and directed the school for orphans in Braga, returning afterward to his own diocese, the Patriarchate of Lisbon, where he was spiritual director of the minor

seminary. He himself came to Jesuits for spiritual direction most of his life, the latter and greater part of which was spent traveling the length of Portugal visiting prisons and hospitals in every city, giving alms to the poor and ministering spiritually to all. Though he desired as early as 1880 to enter the Society of Jesus, his ministry took first place. The superior general of the Jesuits obtained permission first from Pope Pius XI in 1929 to allow Cruz to take vows as a Jesuit on his death bed, against which event Cruz always carried the vow formula with him, and then from Pius XII in 1940 to take vows immediately and without the need of making a novitiate or of residing in a Jesuit community. He did pronounce his vows at the Seminário da Costa in Guimarães on December 3, 1940, the feast of St. Francis Xavier, SJ to whom he had great devotion. His cause for beatification is now being considered.

Fr. Manuel Marques Ferreira, aka Fr. Boicinha – the zealous priest who replaced Fr. Pena as the parish priest of St. Anthony's Church in Aljustrel, and preached against the evils of the custom of endless dancing.”^[2]

Introduction

A century ago, amidst a world of sin, crime, corruption and turmoil, three young shepherd children claimed to have seen a great Lady appear to them in a cove in the small village of Fatima. The date was May 13, 1917 and Lucia dos Santos, a child of just ten years, along with her cousins Jacinta Marto, eight, and her nine-year old brother Francisco, would see the Lady several more times in the ensuing months.

From the outset the children were ridiculed, berated and in some cases, beaten because their stories of a ghostly lady of light standing on a tree talking to three small shepherds was just too much for most to believe. Lucia was bold enough to ask the Lady for a public miracle that would force the masses to accept the children's account as truth, and then publicly exclaimed the Lady's promise to deliver a miracle for all to see. She even noted the date and time that the miraculous event would occur; October 13, 1917 at twelve o'clock Noon. The precision of the prediction would logically indicate the truthfulness of their claim, yet the next several months would bring untold pain and suffering for the children because of the venomous abhorrence from those who believe their message was self-serving fantasy.

Between May and October, the children several times repeated with consistency the facts of their visions. Over the course of those months, a time that included individual interrogations by parents, strangers, clergy, and anticlerics alike, and though being arrested and threatened with a torturous death if they did not recant their stories, the children's account never changed, nor did they ever betray the Lady's command to keep secret several revelations made known during the Apparitions. Three young, innocent peasant children preferred death to deceit and many times thought

they would be shown their preference.

“On the very day, and at nearly the exact hour they had foretold, some 70,000 persons that assembled at the cove testified to the unique experience of seeing the sun dance in the sky, spin around, and then fall toward earth. Witnesses as far as 25 miles away reported seeing the same events. Such widespread testimony serves to confirm that the children actually had seen the Mother of Jesus, and that He had given to the simple souls at Cova da Iria the sign in the sky for which the Pharisees had begged Him in mock reverence, and which He had refused to grant their unbelieving and adulterous hearts.”^[3]

Those that had come to power in Portugal following the revolutionary events preceding the declarations of World War I, intended to destroy religion within two generations and accordingly refused to acknowledge that anything out of the ordinary had occurred on that 13th day of October 1917. Perhaps it takes the unwavering faith of the innocent hearts of children to so readily believe the unbelievable. Others, as Jesus Himself described in the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus, “...will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”^[4]

The visions of Our Lady were beautiful by every account. Yet, within the beauty, Our Lady allowed the children to witness some of the most horrific scenes that both this life, and the afterlife of sinners, may contain. The children were privy to visions of the eternal flames and unending torment of hell. They were also shown the chaos and bloodshed of events on earth, the interpretation of which is still a matter of worldly discord. One hundred years later, controversy abounds regarding the meaning of the various secrets told by Our Lady of the Rosary to the children of Fatima in July 1917.

Though the facts of the events described on the following

pages are incontrovertible, the reader is always free to decide what to believe and how to interpret the events. As with most history, there is usually an element of subjective interpretation despite guidance from those of authority. So, sit back now and come on a virtual journey through history and faith. Open your heart and your mind and this story just might change your life forever!

"It is one of the most enduring and mysterious controversies of the Catholic Church -- The prophesies of Fatima"

~The History Channel

"We are at a crossroads, and one direction will lead to world peace and if we choose the wrong direction it will lead to wars so terrible that nations will be annihilated."

~Michael LaCourte

Executive Director, W.A.F., USA
(World Apostolate of Fatima, USA)

The Promise of Fatima

*One Hundred Years of History, Mystery and
Faith*

PART I
A WORLD IN TURMOIL

May 1894 – May 1911 – Bosnia, Austria-Hungary

Sickness and death seemed constants in the young man's life. Gavrilo Princip, was the son of a postman, born one of nine children in Bosnia-Herzegovina in July of 1894. Six of his eight siblings died in infancy and Gavrilo himself was afflicted with tuberculosis.

Equal to the turmoil created by the sickness within his own house was the political climate enveloping his home nation. The 1878 Treaty of Berlin provided Austria-Hungary the mandate to occupy and administer the Ottoman Vilayet of Bosnia while allowing the Ottoman Empire to remain sovereign. It also recognized the sovereignty of the Principality of Serbia which in 1882 was transformed into a kingdom, one whose rulers maintained close relations with Austria-Hungary^[5]



Serbian National Gavrilo Princip was not quite 20 years old when he fatally shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie on Sunday June 28, 1914 setting off a chain of events that would lead to World War I.

In May of 1903, however, Serbian military officers stormed the Serbian Royal Palace capturing General Laza Petrovic, the head of the Palace Guard. It didn't take long for Petrovic to reveal the hiding place of King Alexander I Obrenovic and his Queen, Draga. Both were brutally assassinated and their bullet-ridden corpses hurled from the palace window. Petar I Karadordevic, a nationalist, was installed as the new King.

Throughout the course of the next decade, relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary deteriorated. Between 1906 and 1913, many wars were fought including the Pig War of 1906, the Bosnian crisis of 1908-1909, and two Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. It was during the latter war that Serbia conquered Macedonia and Kosovo from the Ottoman Empire.



1914 map of Serbia

Serbian nationalists were emboldened by the military successes. In Austria-Hungary, the Serbs grew increasingly bothered under Austro-Hungary rule prompting the organization and proliferation of many Serb cultural groups and prompting the attempted assassinations of many Austro-Hungarian officials. One particular attempt carried out on June 15, 1910 against General Marijan Varesanin by Bogdan Zerajic, a 22-year old Orthodox Serb from Hezegovina, captured the attention of Gavrilo Princip and his friend Nedeljko Cabrinovic. General Varesanin was the Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina and ruled with an iron fist. Zerajic was a mere student at the Faculty of Law at the University of Zagreb when he fired five bullets at Varesanin and then one additional bullet into his own brain. To Princip and Cabrinovic, however, Zerajic was an inspiration.

The Resistance

May 1911 – Belgrade, Serbia

The Black Hand, or “Unification or Death” as it was sometimes known, was an organized terrorist group designed to promote the liberation of Serbs outside Serbia from Ottoman rule. Formed officially on May 9, 1911, the group’s origins can be traced to the National Defense, formed in 1908 with roots predating 1901. The Serbian secret society was led by Col. Dragutin Dimitrijevic. Apis, as he was often called, was a man who had been instrumental in the coup that brought King Petar I to the throne in Serbia in 1903. Membership of the Black Hand was comprised primarily of army officers, though there were a few government officials attending. The members’ ideological viewpoints ran the gambit from the idealism of its young members to the conspiratorial-mindedness of its army officers.^[6]

With their main base of operations in Belgrade, the society conducted

propaganda campaigns and established a network of revolutionary cells throughout Bosnia. While not so influential outside of Serbia, within it, the Black Hand dominated the army and terrorized government officials giving the secret society a great deal of influence. In fact, Black Hand members held positions of importance in both the army and government with Crown Prince Alexander alleged to have been an enthusiastic supporter. Their goal was to unite all the territories with a South Slavic majority that were not ruled by either Serbia or Montenegro and their inspiration was drawn from similar unification efforts in Italy (1859-70) and Germany (1871). Credibility was accomplished through a blurring of the lines of distinction between themselves and a more prestigious organization known as the Narodna Odbrana.



The Black Hand, a secret society and organized terrorist group formed in 1911 under the leadership of Col. Dragutin Dimitrijevic, was comprised of army officers and government officials who conducted propaganda campaigns and established a network of revolutionary cells throughout Bosnia.

Dimitrijevic knew well that success of the group depended on secrecy. To that end, he insisted that members knew only of the activities of their own cell. Members were required to take an oath swearing:

“By the Sun which shineth upon me, by the Earth which feedeth me, by God, by the blood of my forefathers, by my honor and by my life, that from this moment onward and until my death, I shall faithfully serve the task of this organization and that I shall at all times be prepared to bear for it any sacrifice. I further swear by God, by my honor and by my life, that I shall unconditionally carry into effect all its orders and commands. I further swear by my God, by my honor and by

my life, that I shall keep within myself all the secrets of this organization and carry them with me into my grave. May God and my brothers in this organization be my judges if at any time I should wittingly fail or break this oath.”

Dimitrijevic would soon learn that there was no shortage of potential revolutionaries willing to take his oath.

May 1912 – Belgrade, Serbia

Despite his own sense of loss and his poor health, Princip had attended schools in Sarajevo and Tuzla, but, in May 1912, just two months shy of his eighteenth birthday, Princip left his home in Bosnia to study in Belgrade, the capital and largest city in Serbia. It was here that Princip aggrandized the nationalist tendencies he had begun to nurture while in Bosnia. He would later say that the would-be assassin, Bogdan Zerajic “*was my first model. When I was seventeen I passed whole nights at his grave, reflecting on our wretched condition and thinking of him. It is there that I made up my mind sooner or later to perpetrate an outrage.*”^[7]

Princip and other like-minded political activists hoped to one day unify the independent Kingdom of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, territories previously annexed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1908. By this time, he had come to despise the polyglot empire of Austria-Hungary. The Empire was now comprised of various ethnic groups that vociferously disagreed about fundamental principles of religion, politics and the like. Naturally the annexation angered Serbian nationalists who held strongly the belief that the territories should be part of Serbia.

Princip was caught up in the political fervor and with the Ottomans being pushed out of the Balkans, he saw an opportunity. So, while living in Serbia, he enlisted in the Black Hand. With alleged ties to the Kingdom of Serbia, this nationalist organization shared his vision for a greater Yugoslavia. The Black Hand shared Princip’s disgust of Emperor Franz Joseph’s proposed reforms that included plans to combine the Slavic lands within the Austro-Hungarian empire into a third crown. Such reorganization could have been a safeguard against Serb irredentism. This possibility made Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Franz Joseph, a threat to those who stood in opposition to the Emperor’s plans.

And so, at the rather young age of nineteen Princip was determined, troubled and in poor health, a trio of character traits that in combination can have lethal consequences. The world was about to learn just how lethal.

January 1914 – Toulouse, France

While some members of the Black Hand kept busy training in guerrilla warfare tactics, various cell leaders plotted an action that might serve to achieve their goal of a united Serbia. Muhamed Mehmedbasic was the carpenter son of an impoverished Muslim nobleman from Herzegovina. He was also a member of the Black Hand who had recently returned from Toulouse, France where he attended a meeting with Serbian Major Vojislav Tankosic, Dimitrijevic's trusted advisor. Mehmedbasic longed to revive the revolutionary spirit of Bosnia and, to that end, was eager to carry out any act of terrorism that might achieve that objective. During his meeting in Toulouse various officials were discussed as possible targets of assassination but one had been picked and Mehmedbasic received his assignment; go to Bosnia-Herzegovina and kill Bosnian Governor Oskar Potiorek.

Mehmedbasic procured his weapons, a dagger, and a bottle of poison, and boarded a train leaving France, bound for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unbeknownst to Mehmedbasic, a wanted thief had also managed to board the train. When police boarded the train in search of the thief, Mehmedbasic's paranoia piqued and he tossed the weapons out of the train window. When he finally arrived in Bosnia, the would-be assassin had no weapons with which to carry out his attack. Almost immediately, he began the search for new implements of death thereby delaying the plot to kill Governor Potiorek.

March 26, 1914 – Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Dimitrijevic had discovered that not all were pleased with the plan to kill Potiorek, so to satisfy the Serbs, Dimitrijevic ordered instead, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, an order that may not have been sanctioned by the full Executive Committee of the Black Hand. On March 26, 1914, Mehmedbasic was summoned to a meeting in Mostar where Danilo Ilic, a former Sarajevo school teacher who now worked for a newspaper, informed him that they have rescinded the order to kill Potiorek in favor of a plan to assassinate Ferdinand. Mehmedbasic was ordered to await further

instructions.

Late April 1914 – Belgrade, Serbia

To carry out his new mission, Ilic recruited two Serbian youths, Vaso Cubrilovic and Cvjetko Popovic. He did so shortly after the celebration of the Orthodox Easter on April 19, 1914. At around the same time, three additional young Bosnian Serbs, Gavrilo Princip, Nedeljko Cabrinovic and Trifko Grabaz, all subjects of Austria-Hungary, approached Milan Ciganovic, a former guerrilla fighter known for his ability to procure weapons. Through Ciganovic, the men were put in touch with Major Tankosic with whom they reached an agreement to transport arms to Sarajevo and participate in the assassination. The three young men had already been trained in marksmanship and bomb throwing by members of the Serbian military.

Tuesday May 26, 1914 – Belgrade, Serbia

Though eager to carry out the assassination, the young men had no recourse but to wait patiently as circumstances, including the Emperor's health issues, caused delays in the delivery of the weapons. Finally, the men took delivery of the first gun when Tankosic gave the assassins one FN Model 1910 pistol. They took turns shooting some practice rounds of very expensive .380 ACP ammunition in a park near Belgrade and then waited until May 26, 1914 when the balance of the weapons arrived. Among the provisions supplied on that day by Major Tankosic were

“six hand grenades, four new Browning FN Model 1910 automatic pistols with sufficient .380 ACP ammunition, money, suicide pills, training [of Princip, Grabaz and Cabrinovic], a special map with the location of gendarmes marked, knowledge of contacts on a clandestine tunnel used to infiltrate agents and arms into Austria-Hungary, and a small card authorizing the use of that tunnel.”^[8]

Thursday May 28, 1914 – Belgrade, Serbia

Armed with more weaponry than needed, and trained in its use, Princip, Grabez and Cabrinovic boarded a boat from Belgrade to Sabec via the Sava River. There they handed Serbian Border Guard, Captain Popovic, the small card provided them by Tankosic. In exchange, they received a letter addressed to Serbian Captain Prvanovic, and a form containing the names of three customs officials whose identities they could assume. That letter would entitle them to discounted train tickets to the small border town of Loznica.

Friday May 29, 1914 – Loznica, Serbia

The three assassins arrived in Loznica the following day. There the three met with Captain Prvanovic who summoned three of his revenue sergeants. As the men waited for the revenue sergeants to arrive, they argued over what Princip and Grabez said were Cabrinovic's repeated violations of operational security. The disagreement culminated with Cabrinovic handing over his weapons. Princip then instructed him to go to Zvornik and use the ID card provided by Grabez to cross the border into Tuzla where he could wait for the others. When the revenue sergeants arrived, they discussed how best to cross the border undetected.

SATURDAY MAY 30 – FRIDAY JUNE 5, 1914 ISAKOVIC ISLAND

It was still the morning of May 30th when Sergeant Budivoj Grbic walked Princip and Grabez to Isakovic's Island, a small mass of land on the Drina River separating Bosnia from Serbia. Arriving the next day, the assassins and their weapons were passed on to agents of the Serbian Narodna Odbrana who transported them to the first of many safe houses. Beginning on the evening of June 1st, Princip, Grabez and the weapons were passed from one agent to another, each taking them a bit further along until June 3, 1914 when they arrived in Tuzla. Misko Jovanovic, one of the Narodna Odbrana agents, kept charge of the weapons while Princip and Grabez linked up with Cabrinovic. All the while, Narodna Odbrana agents reported their activities to the group's President who kept Serbian Caretaker Prime Minister Nikola Pasic updated.



Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Franz Joseph was arguably the richest man in Austria. He was viewed by members of the Black Hand as a threat to those who stood in opposition to the Emperor's plan. His assassination sparked World War I. This photo was taken in 1914.

Cabrinovic's father happened to be a police official in Sarajevo and while in Tuzla, Cabrinovic met with a police detective that was friendly with his father. He discretely inquired and learned that Franz Ferdinand would be visiting Sarajevo on June 28. He passed that information to Princip and Grabez. They decided that would be the day of the assassination.

The three assassins arrived in Sarajevo on June 4th and all went their separate ways. Princip took advantage of the separation to visit family and check in with Ilic. On June 6th, he took up residence with Ilic's mother. Grabez visited his family in Pale and Cabrinovic moved into his father's house in Sarajevo.

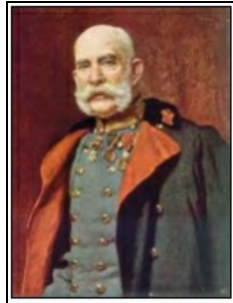
While all this was happening, it was learned that Demitrijevic may have acted unilaterally in ordering the change of target from Governor Potiorek to Archduke Ferdinand. Though Demitrijevic had every reason to believe that the action would result in a war between Austria and Serbia he also believed that Russia would rush to the aid of Serbia providing the protection necessary to ensure a Serbian victory. But if there is any truth to the allegation that Prime Minister Pasic was unaware of the new assassination target, the revelation did nothing to alter the arrangement. For though he may have been unable to act in time to prevent the assassins from crossing the border into Sarajevo, once there, the trio idled for about a month before executing their plan. They did so without interference. The result of their completed mission would set off a chain of events far deadlier than any anticipated Austro-Serbian war could possibly be.

Sunday June 14 – Thursday June 18, 1914
Tuzla, Bosnia & Herzegovina

On June 14th Ilic traveled to Tuzla to retrieve the weapons being held by Misko Jovanovic so they could be delivered to Sarajevo. Jovanovic hid them in a large box of sugar and, the next day, the two travelers boarded a train to Doboj separately. There, Jovanovic handed the box of weapons to Ilic. Later in the afternoon of June 15th, Ilic took the box and boarded a train.

To avoid police detection, he transferred to a local train outside Sarajevo and then transferred again to a tram that would take him to his mother's house. Ilic then removed the weapons from the sugar box, placed them in a suitcase, and hid the suitcase under the sofa. For reasons that are unclear at best, Ilic travelled to Brod sometime between June 16 and June 18.

SATURDAY JUNE 6 – SATURDAY JUNE 27, 1914 AUSTRIA-HUNGARY



The Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I planned to combine the Slavic lands within the Austro-Hungarian empire into a third crown, a plan drawing the ire of The Black Hand.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Duchess Sophie von Chotkovato, were making final arrangements for departure on their mission to Bosnia. There, under orders of his uncle, Emperor Franz Joseph, the Archduke was to observe the military maneuvers that were scheduled to take place in the capital city of Sarajevo.

Ferdinand, a Roman Catholic deeply in love with Sophie, looked forward to the trip as an opportunity to share the splendor of his position with his wife. Because Sophie was not born of a dynastic family, her marriage to Ferdinand, arguably the richest man in Austria, carried with it certain restrictions. Franz Joseph had consented to the marriage with the condition that no heir of the couple could ascend to the throne. Further, Sophie was barred from any share of Ferdinand's rank and splendor. She was not even allowed to sit by his side at a public event unless the Archduke was acting in a military capacity. Consequently, this trip would provide the opportunity for the couple to sit side-by-side in an open car as they traveled through Sarajevo on the fourteenth anniversary of their marriage.

Sophie, on the other hand, was less concerned about the pomp and circumstance related to the mission. Rather, according to the couple's oldest son, Duke Maximilian, Sophie was acutely aware of the political tensions that existed and feared for her husband's safety. It was for this reason that she insisted on accompanying her husband on the trip to Bosnia. Once there, the royal couple also planned to celebrate the opening of the new location of the state museum.



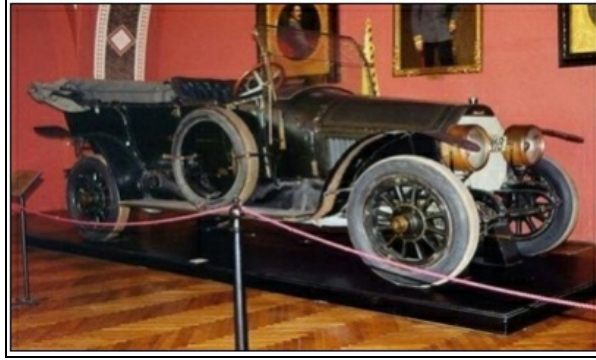
Duchess Sophie von Chotkovato was not born of a dynastic family and her marriage to Ferdinand was not readily accepted by Franz Joseph. Though he ultimately consented to the union, he imposed several restrictions, one of which prevented her from appearing in public with Ferdinand except when he was acting in a military capacity.

While the Archduke prepared for travel, Ilic began handing out the weapons. It was June 27th and as they sat in a café in Sarajevo, Ilic introduced Mehmedbasic to Princip saying “tomorrow [he] is to be with us.” Up until this day, the identities of the assassins from Belgrade and those he had recruited locally had not known of the others involvement. Ilic, Mehmedbasic and Princip then sent a postcard to France addressed to Vladimir Gacinovic, the Black Hand Provincial Director of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 1914 – 9:28 AM SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

The morning sun shone brightly on this warm summer day as the train carrying the Archduke and Dutchess departed Ilidza Spa toward Sarajevo. As the train sped toward its destination, Governor Oskar Potiorek made his way to the station to meet the royal couple and their party. Six automobiles were waiting when the Archduke and his entourage arrived.

Three local police officers mistakenly climbed into the lead car with the chief officer of special security, leaving behind the special security officers who were supposed to accompany their chief. Mayor Fehim Curcic, and the Sarajevo Police Commissioner Dr. Gerde, took their positions in the first car of dignitaries.

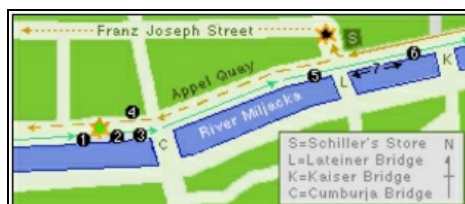


*The 1911 Graf & Stift 28/32 PS Double Phaeton
that carried Ferdinand and Sophie at the time of their assassination.*

Ignoring the warnings that the Black Hand had been involved in terrorist activities, the royal couple, along with Governor Potiorek, took their seats in the back of a 1911 Graf & Stift 28/32 PS Double Phaeton. It was Serb National Day which made the atmosphere even more dangerous than it might have otherwise been. Regardless, a decision was made to leave the top rolled back on the Archduke's sports car. Lieutenant Colonel Count Franz von Harrach and the driver were seated up front.

SUNDAY JUNE 28, 1914 – 10:00 AM SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

To make the job of the limited security officers on hand even more difficult, the motorcade route had been pre-announced with the first stop being a brief inspection of the military barracks scheduled for 10:00 AM. The motorcade was then scheduled to travel to the town hall via Appel Quay for a reception hosted by Sarajevo's mayor. General Michael von Appel, the local military commander, had proposed that a line of troops stand along the intended route, but the proposal was nixed for fear of offending the loyal citizenry. Instead, all matters of security were left to the sixty on-duty members of the Sarajevo Police Department.



Map of the assassination route showing where each of the assassins was standing when Archduke

Ferdinand's motorcade passed by. #1 marks the location of Mehmedbasic, #2 is Cabrinovic, who threw the grenade that exploded underneath the car behind the one carrying the Archduke, #3 is Cubrilovic, #4 is Popovic, #5 is Princip, who eventually murdered Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie in front of Schiller's Delicatessen, and #6 marks the location of Grabez. (Image courtesy of Michael Corsini of Skepsis Multimedia.)

SUNDAY JUNE 28, 1914 – 10:08 AM SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

The motorcade worked its way toward the Austro-Hungarian Bank and the Mostar Café where Mehmedbasic, the first of the assassins standing along the route, was positioned. Mehmedbasic, who concealed a bomb, stood right in front of the Café's garden, exactly where Ilic had placed him. As the motorcade passed in front of him, however, Mehmedbasic noticed that a policeman was standing right behind him. Fearing that he would get arrested before getting a chance to throw his bomb, he got cold feet and fled the scene. Standing right next to him was a second assassin, Vaso Cubrilovic. Though armed with a pistol and a bomb, he too failed to take any action later saying that he couldn't bring himself to fire upon the beautiful Sophie.

SUNDAY JUNE 28, 1914 – 10:10 AM SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA



Archduke Ferdinand and Duchess Sophie greet bystanders along the motorcade route on the day of their assassination.

A little further along the route, on the opposite side of the street near the central police station, stood Nedeljko Cabrinovic. From his position near the Miljacka River, this third assassin concealed a grenade. As Franz Ferdinand's car drove near, Cabrinovic threw the explosive which had a 10 second delayed fuse. The grenade, however, bounced off the folded back convertible cover and rolled into the street, exploding under the car

immediately behind the Archduke's vehicle. That car carried the head of Ferdinand's military chancellery; Sophie's lady in waiting; Potiorek's chief adjutant, Lt. Colonel Eric von Merizzi; the owner of the car and his driver. The explosion disabled the vehicle, left a crater that measured one-foot in diameter and 6.5 inches in depth, and wounded between 16-20 people including von Merizzi and another occupant of the car. To prevent his capture, Cabrinovic immediately swallowed his cyanide pill and leaped into the River. Two detectives and two observers jumped in after him. The cyanide pill was apparently not of sufficient strength and failed to kill Cabrinovic, causing him instead to only vomit. To make matters worse for the would-be assassin, the hot, dry summer caused a dramatic reduction in the depth of the river water which was now just a tad over 5 inches deep. So rather than dredging his dead body from the river, police were able to retrieve Cabrinovic very much alive and take him into custody, but not before the crowd had an opportunity to exact their revenge by beating him severely.

The procession, meanwhile left the disabled vehicle and sped away in the direction of Town Hall. Franz Urban drove so fast that it was virtually impossible for remaining assassins Popovic, Princip and Grabez to fire their weapons as the motorcade sped passed each of them. Princip, thinking the assassination attempt had been foiled, began to walk home, stopping along the way in Moritz Schiller's delicatessen near the Latin Bridge, to get a sandwich and to collect his thoughts. After collecting his thoughts, Princip concluded that the royal motorcade would be passing Schiller's on its way to the National Museum. He decided, therefore, to wait on the sidewalk in front of the delicatessen hoping for one more chance to complete the mission. Princip had no way of knowing that the government officials had cancelled the events planned for the rest of the day.

SUNDAY JUNE 28, 1914 – 10:20 AM SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

The remaining members of the royal party arrived at Town Hall and made their way inside. Mayor Fehim Curcic began his prepared remarks, but the visibly upset Archduke interrupted him. "*Mr. Mayor,*" the Archduke said, "*I came here on a visit and I am greeted with bombs. It is outrageous.*" After being calmed down by Sophie, Ferdinand allowed the Mayor to complete his remarks. Before beginning his own prepared remarks, Ferdinand

had to wait for a copy of his speech to arrive. The speech had been in the possession of an aid who was riding in the damaged car. When it arrived, it was still wet and stained with the blood of the blast victims. So, in addition to delivering segments of the prepared remarks, Ferdinand adlibbed a bit by thanking the people of Sarajevo for their support adding, *“I see in them an expression of their joy at the failure of the attempt at assassination.”*^[9]

While the dignitaries addressed their audience, members of the official party discussed their options. A decision had already been made to cancel the balance of the day’s planned events. Now, Baron Rumerskirch, Ferdinand’s chamberlain, suggested that the royal couple remain at Town Hall until armed troops could arrive. That idea was rejected by Governor Potiorek, however, because the soldiers would be arriving directly from their maneuvers and would not have on the appropriate dress uniforms typically worn for such duties. Potiorek added rhetorically, “Do you think that Sarajevo is full of assassins?”

Ferdinand and Sophie though were more concerned about the condition of those wounded in the motorcade blast and insisted on making a stop at the hospital to check on them. Potiorek agreed but thought it best for the Dutchess to remain at Town Hall. Sophie refused saying, *“As long as the Archduke shows himself in public today, I will not leave him.”*^[10]

SUNDAY JUNE 28, 1914 – 10:45 AM SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

Archduke Ferdinand, Sophie and Potiorek all entered the rear seats of the motorcade’s third car. As they departed Town Hall, Count Harrach climbed atop the left running board of that car in a protective position. Governor Potiorek had ordered the royal car to travel straight along the Appel Quay to the Sarajevo Hospital. This route (see map on page 14) would avoid the dangers that might persist in the city centre. However, with Potiorek’s aid, Eric von Merizzi, in the hospital being treated for the injuries he had received in the earlier explosion, that message was never delivered to the driver who mistakenly took a right turn onto Franz Josef Street, the original route that would have taken them to the National Museum.



The Royal couple leave town hall after making speeches following the failed assassination attempt on June 28, 1914. Fate would lead their car right into the path of another waiting assassin.



This is what the street of Sarajevo looked like on June 28, 1914 minutes before Princip assassinated the Archduke and Duchess.

SUNDAY JUNE 28, 1914 – 10:50 AM SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

Potiorek yelled out to the driver to reverse direction and instead take the Quay to the hospital. The driver complied, stopping the car almost in front of Schiller's delicatessen before backing up. Princip was astounded at his good fortune as he was only three yards away. He immediately stepped forward, and pulling the FN Model 1910 pistol chambered for the .380 ACP from his coat, fired twice into the car from a distance of only 5 feet. The first bullet struck the Archduke in the neck piercing the jugular vein. The second, which Princip later maintained was intended for Governor Potiorek, hit Sophie in the abdomen. Though mortally wounded, both remained upright in their seats. Perhaps, because of their upright position, Potiorek assumed the shots had missed but because of the very attempt, instructed the driver, Franz Urban, to go directly to the Governor's mansion.

Princip, following instructions he had been given, pointed the gun at his own head. A man standing behind him saw this and seized Princip's right arm foiling the suicide attempt. Two police officers joined the struggle to subdue Princip and immediately took possession of the weapon and arrested him.



Gavrilo Princip was captured moments after assassinating Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie. After his suicide attempt was foiled by a man standing behind him, he was arrested and led away by police for interrogation.

Amidst the confusion and hysteria, Urban quickly backed the car up and began the drive to the Governor's house. As the car made its way across Laieiner Bridge, "a stream of blood shot from Franz Ferdinand's mouth." At seeing this, Sophie yelled, "For Heaven's sake! What happened to you?" As she said this, she sank down in her seat. The Governor and Harrach thought she had fainted and reached back to help her up. Ferdinand, however, knew

the truth – his wife was bleeding internally from the gunshot wound. Ferdinand looked toward Sophie and yelled, “*Sophie dear, Sophie dear! Don’t die! Live for our children!*”^[11]

The car carrying Potiorek and the wounded royal couple sped toward the Governor’s residence where the royal couple might get some medical treatment.



The bloodstained military uniform worn by Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914.

SUNDAY JUNE 28, 1914 – 11:30 AM SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

The car pulled up to the Governor’s house within 40 minutes of the shootings, but it was too late. Dutchess Sophie had died from her fatal gunshot wound while enroute, and Archduke Ferdinand barely clung to life. He died about ten minutes later.



Archduke Franz Ferdinand was a Catholic and very much in love with Sophie. Their marriage, though

ultimately accepted by Ferdinand's uncle Franz Joseph, meant that no heir of the couple could ever be in the line of succession to the throne. Though mortally wounded himself, Ferdinand looked at his blood-drenched wife yelling "Sophie dear! Sophie dear! Don't die! Live for our children!" But Princess Sophie of Hohenberg was already dead when the car carrying the wounded couple arrived at the Governor's mansion.

THE AFTERMATH

JULY 28, 1914 – APRIL 6, 1917

As the Black Hand had hoped, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie proved to be the last straw and brought Austro-Serbian tensions to a head. While there was no hard evidence immediately pointing to the Black Hand's involvement, the volume of circumstantial evidence was all Vienna needed to take action. Austria-Hungary took a strong stance against Serbia. Within weeks, much of Europe would line up in support of one side or the other and what was once a squabble between Austria and Serbia now threatened to evolve into a World War. No one in the Black Hand could have predicted the swift escalation of events.



The cover of the New York Times the day following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Duchess Sophie.

JULY 28, 1914
30 DAYS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

Austria declares war on Serbia in retribution for the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Dutchess Sophie.

JULY 30, 1914
32 DAYS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

As expected, Russia comes to the defense of its Serbian ally using its vast army to intervene. The military move starts a chain reaction of events that caused other great European powers to take note and inevitably become involved in the hostilities.

AUGUST 1, 1914
33 DAYS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

Germany declares war on Russia for assisting its Serbian ally.

AUGUST 2, 1914
34 DAYS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

The German Government informs the Belgian government of its demand that the German troops be given free passage across Belgium, to facilitate the efficient invasion of France as the German army moves into Paris. A treaty between Britain and Belgium, however, required the support of one against attack of the other. Therefore, the German movement through Belgium was tantamount to an attack on France.

AUGUST 3, 1914
35 DAYS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

Germany declares war on France.

AUGUST 4, 1914

36 DAYS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

Germany invades Belgium hoping to crush France before Russia might have a chance to mobilize in the defense of France. As the German army swept toward Paris, however, Russia mobilized more quickly than anticipated and applied pressure on the Germans from East Prussia. At the same time, Britain made a fateful decision to enter the war meaning that all nations of the British Empire which included Australia, Canada and New Zealand, were automatic participants of the war as well.

APRIL 22, 1915

German soldiers fire chlorine gas-filled shells at Allied lines causing the near-collapse of the French lines. In addition to chemical weapons, other “new implements” of war are used with deadly results. Machine guns, tanks and airplanes all contributed to a deadly, morale crushing war of attrition costing hundreds of thousands of lives to this point.

MAY 7, 1915

A German submarine fires upon and sinks the passenger liner Lusitania as it carried 1,198 people, including 128 Americans. Over the course of the next several months, Germany took many other actions that provoked the United States which, up until this time, was sending supplies to France and Britain, but had not assumed an active military role in the war.

MARCH 9, 1916

German U-Boat warfare was causing tensions between Germany and Portugal to rise, but the boiling point was reached when Germany sought to blockade the United Kingdom, at the time, the most important market for Portuguese products. Ultimately, tensions resulted in declarations of war, first by Germany against Portugal on March 9, 1916 followed very quickly by Portugal’s reciprocal declaration on Germany.

FEBRUARY 25, 1917

With well over a million people already dead, a war that looked unwinnable on land turned to the sea, but the introduction of submarines and the German U-boat created the same stalemate on the waters. With neither side poised to win, the United States is provoked into the war. British intelligence provides United States President Woodrow Wilson the so-called Zimmerman Telegram, a message from German foreign secretary Arthur Zimmerman proposing that Mexico side with Germany in case of war between Germany and the United States. In return, Germany promises to return to Mexico the “lost provinces” of Texas and much of the rest of the American Southwest. Mexico declines the offer, but the outrage at this interference in the Western Hemisphere pushes American public opinion toward support of entering the war.

APRIL 2, 1917

President Wilson takes his case for war to Congress asking that Congress support the entry of the United States into World War I.

APRIL 6, 1917

The Congress of the United States authorizes a declaration of war against Germany, officially entering the US into the War as allies of Britain and France.

PART II
THE PEACE OF
INNOCENCE

1910 – 1917 - Fatima, Ourem, Portugal

The tiny shepherd parish of Fatima, in the town of Ourem, Portugal seems a world apart from the site of the assassination that ignited the first World War. Nestled between the North Atlantic Ocean and Spain, the coastal nation is in fact just under 1,850 miles removed from the bustling city atmosphere of Bosnia. Despite the great distance and the vast differences between them however, Portugal and Bosnia were experiencing very similar political chaos.

For over a century, Portugal had been in steady decline due in large part to Freemasonry, which dominated both government and society. In 1910 the Portuguese Revolution deposed the ruling monarchy and established a Republic comprised primarily of high-ranking Freemasons. Amidst the political anarchy there was disorder. Despite a dizzying succession of different governments following the revolution and the strikes and street violence, the unsympathetic attitude of the Freemasons toward the Catholic faith remained a constant. Catholic Churches were targeted for pillage during the revolution, its convents attacked and its religious harassed. With the immediate passage of anticlerical legislation, monasteries, convents and religious orders were suppressed. The religious themselves were personally expelled and their goods confiscated. Jesuits were forced to forfeit their Portuguese citizenship.

One after another new laws, meant to crush the spirit of Catholics, were passed by the government. First a divorce law, then a law on cremation, followed in rapid succession by laws on the secularization of cemeteries, the abolition of the religious oath, suppression of religious teaching in schools and the prohibition of wearing the priestly cassock.

Restraints were placed on the ringing of church bells and the times that religious services could be held. Celebrations of religious feasts were suppressed and the government gave itself the authority to name seminary professors and determine their programs. The new liberal constitution culminated with the passage of the law of Separation of Church and State, which according to the author of the law, Alfonso Costa, was meant to eliminate Catholicism from Portugal within two generations. If not for the strength of Pope Pius X who rejected all compromise with Portugal's atheistic rulers, and the fervor of the Portuguese Catholics who stood solidly behind their Pope, Costa's intention may have been realized.

The government used the disorder to “sow irreligion in the masses,” according to Cannon Barthas, who added, “*The times were evil. The future was even more somber.*”

The Catholic resistance resulted in the government exiling many of the bishops from the country while causing the imprisonment of others. For the people of Portugal though, faith was the very air they breathed and through it all, the Church retained its faith and retained its presence despite the persecutions.

One microcosm of such faithful persistence lay on a dusty road in Aljustrel, a village comprised of a collection of whitewashed houses in the parish of Fatima. It was in this hamlet, where the word of the village priest was the final authority, that three children, related by blood, were born.

MARCH 22, 1907 – 1913

Lucia dos Santos was born on March 22, 1907 into a family that already included five other children; Maria dos Anjos and Teresa were the oldest and already grown at the time of Lucia’s birth. Manuel, the only son was born next, then Gloria. Carolina was the second youngest child and was five years older than Lucia. Lucia’s parents, Antonio dos Santos and Maria Rosa Ferreira also gave birth to another baby girl who died in infancy.



Born on March 22, 1907, Lucia was the youngest of six children of Antonio dos Santos and Maria Rosa Ferreira. Lucia, at ten years old, was the oldest of the three children to witness the visions of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Lucia’s early childhood years were very happy; surrounded by such loving family who doted over the newest sibling to join the group. At the heart of the family was Maria Rosa, a proud and strong-willed mother who always rocked Lucia to sleep in the security of her arms to the beautiful melodic sound of her lullabies. Any squabbles that ensued were generally between other siblings all wanting to hold the baby Lucia in their arms or to play with her. Any such quarrels usually ended abruptly as Maria Rosa would

scoop the child away from the unhappy children altogether and sing a song to help quiet the clan. Even when her mother was too busy to hold the baby herself, she would gently hand Lucia to Antonio who would fondle the child covering her with caresses.

Antonio labored as a small farmer and sheep grower, but he also owned several pieces of land scattered throughout the Serra da Aire. His good looks and passionate eyes betrayed his cordiality as it could be said that he was more comfortable sipping wine than working the fields.

Maria Rosa in many ways was the antithesis of her husband. She was a devout Catholic bordering on the severe. Short, stout and muscular in appearance she had somewhat of a masculine face that she may well have passed on to Lucia. She rarely had time for frivolity as her time was spent at work and teaching her Catholic ways to her children, something she started doing when the children were at a very early age.

The first thing that Lucia learned was the Hail Mary as Maria Rosa held baby Lucia in her arms while she taught the prayer to Carolina. In fact, Maria Rosa taught catechism to all her children, regardless of age, during the summer months, usually at siesta time. In the winter, the nightly lessons would take place following supper while the family gathered around the fire for warmth. Typically, the older children would roast and eat chestnuts and a sweet variety of acorns as they learned. As one can imagine in any family, especially one with so many children, Lucia had more than a few battles with her older sisters, squabbles that would generally end with Lucia crying on the floor until her mother would take her in her arms.

Maria Rosa joked that Lucia was like a parrot because she repeated everything she heard. When the infant became a toddler, her mother insisted that Maria and Teresa, the oldest of the family, take Lucia everywhere they went. The elder children were very sociable and villagers called them “the leading lights among the young people,” as there was not a festival dance that they did not attend. Such dances would always be scheduled at Carnival time, or at certain religious celebrations such as St. John’s Day and Christmas. In addition, the vintage and the olive picking times were always celebrated with a dance almost every day. During those celebrations, and during big parish festivals such as the feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Anthony, etc., a cakes raffle was immediately followed by a dance.

The dos Santos family was quite popular in the village of Fatima and

the elder dos Santos children were invited to all the weddings for miles around. Maria Rosa was frequently asked to serve as the matron of honor primarily because the bride's family was sure to need her for the cooking. At these weddings, the dancing began right after the banquet and lasted until well into the next morning.

Because Lucia spent so much time in her sister's care, they took great pains to dress her up as well as they did themselves. One of her sisters was a dressmaker, so Lucia was always decked out in a regional costume more elegant than that of any other girl in the Hamlet. With a typical outfit consisting of a pleated skirt, a shiny belt, a cashmere kerchief with the corners hanging down behind, and a hat decorated with gold beads and bright colored feathers, one might think that her sisters were dressing a doll rather than a small child.

At the dances her sisters would hoist little Lucia up on top of a wooden chest or some other tall piece of furniture so that she wouldn't be trampled underfoot by the other adolescents and young adults in attendance. From that perch Lucia would sing songs to the piano or concertina, a free-reed musical instrument with bellows and buttons on the ends much like those of an accordion. Her sisters had already taught Lucia to sing and had shown her how to dance the waltz. Frequently, if there was no suitable partner to be found, they would dance with her. Consequently, despite her young age, Lucia was a good dancer and would oftentimes attract attention and applause when she performed. Some even gave her gifts but did so more as a means of pleasing Lucia's sisters.^[12]

On Sunday afternoons, many young people would gather in Lucia's yard, playing and chatting with her sisters. They would stay outdoors under the shade of three large fig trees in the summer and assemble in an open porch in the winter. Years later, her sister Maria would build a house on the area where the porch was located.

This is also where they would raffle the sugared almonds at Easter time, most of which would find their way into Lucia's pocket, given to her by some of the winners who hoped to gain the family's good graces. While the children played, Lucia's mother would spend the afternoon seated at the kitchen door. From that vantage point she could look out on the yard and see all that was going on. Sometimes she would read as she kept watch. Other times she chatted with Lucia's aunts or neighbors who frequently stopped by just to be in her company.

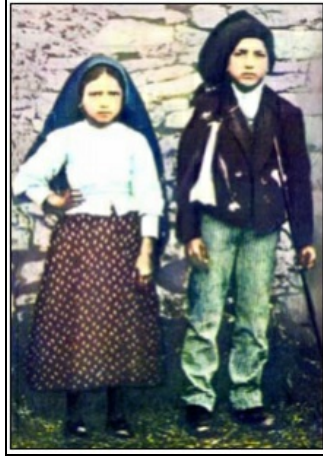
Lucia's mother was always very serious. Those that knew her understood that when she spoke, she was serious and must be obeyed without a fuss. Lucia never heard anyone disrespect her or show her any lack of consideration. Most regarded her very highly. Despite all the weddings and social affairs that she attended, Maria Rosa really enjoyed just staying home with a good book. You could usually find her reading about the lives of saints whom she considered to be so beautiful. She couldn't understand how so many others enjoyed going from house to house wasting time chatting.

During the week, there were always many neighborhood children under her care as neighbors who had to go to work in the fields would ask her to watch their children. While in her care the children played a variety of games and Maria Rosa would often delegate the responsibility of watching them to her older children.

Overall, Lucia was very happy during these first six years and felt that the world was beginning to smile on her. Her passion for dancing was taking hold and she loved her family more than all else.

Not far from the dos Santos home was that of Antonio's sister Olimpia Marto and her second husband Manuel Pedro Marto. Theirs was a rather large family as Olimpia had two children by her first husband, Jose Fernandes Rosa, and nine more with Manuel whom she married in 1897. Among those eleven children were the two youngest, Francisco, born on June 11, 1908 and Jacinta, the last of the Marto children, who arrived on March 11, 1910.^[13]

Though Lucia was very fond of her aunt and uncle, she did her best to avoid the company of Francisco and Jacinta whom she found rather taxing, though eventually, she grew very devoted to them as they became her closest companions. Lucia's Uncle Manuel was a man of exceptional character. With his cropped moustache, a short haircut and a quiet manner, he had a look of sophistication that tended to command the respect of those in his company. Like his wife, he could neither read nor write and unlike his brother-in-law Antonio, neither gambled nor drank. Rather he was a hard worker and ardent saver who was known to occasionally splurge for his family. He was unafraid to speak to those in authority knowing that, as men, they are equals. Above all, he was the master of the Marto household.



Saint Francisco Marto, nine-years old at the time of the 1917 Apparitions poses with his seven-year old sister Saint Jacinta. The two were the youngest children of Manuel and Olimpia Marto. Olimpia and Antonio dos Santo were brother and sister.

Olimpia was a strong woman, proud of her home and its accoutrements, particularly the old, outdoor brick oven in which she baked more than the occasional loaf of bread over the years.

Francisco was a handsome boy with a demeanor very much like his father's. For a young child he displayed no fear, willing to go alone into the darkest and foggiest night. A typical boy in many respects, Francisco enjoyed handling snakes and lizards, dropping them in water to see them wiggle away.



According to Lucia, Francisco was very much unlike Jacinta, neither capricious nor vivacious. Rather, he was quiet and submissive by nature. He preferred playing the flute to dancing and few of the children enjoyed playing games with him because, Lucia said, he always lost.

Jacinta too was a beautiful child. She could always be found running and had a great love for dancing. Jacinta was also a stubborn, independent and spoiled child known to pout at the slightest annoyance.



Saint Jacinta Marto, according to Lucia, had an oversensitive temperament. For that reason, Lucia found her company to be disagreeable. The slightest quarrel among the children at play could send her into a corner to pout. To avoid this, Lucia and Francesco always let her choose the game and her partner. Despite that, Jacinta had a sweet and gentle character which made her at once, according to Lucia, lovable and attractive.

1913 – MORNING

TWO DAYS BEFORE LUCIA’S FIRST COMMUNION

Children in Portugal traditionally waited for an older age to receive their First Communion. The parish of St. Anthony’s in Aljustrel, where Lucia was baptized, established the common age of ten years old for the administration of this particular sacrament.^[14]

Yet, Maria Rosa had prepared her thoroughly for this day and Lucia, at the age of only six, knew her catechism well enough to test for her First Holy Communion.

With that goal in mind, Maria Rosa sent Lucia and Carolina to “catechism instructions which Fr. Pena, the parish priest, was giving to the children in preparation for this great day. She went, therefore, radiant with joy, hoping to be able to receive God in the Host for the first time. After Fr. Pena instructed the children from his chair up on a platform, he asked Lucia to sit by his side. Some of the others were not as well prepared as Lucia and when a child was unable to provide an answer to the priest’s question, he would have Lucia respond as a means of shaming the child.^[15]

EVENING

TWO DAYS BEFORE LUCIA’S FIRST COMMUNION

On the night before the selection of First Communicants, Fr. Pena notified all the children that they were to go to the church the following morning to learn who would be able to receive their First Communion. Lucia was well prepared and she knew that Fr. Pena was impressed with her knowledge and skills.

MORNING

THE DAY BEFORE LUCIA'S FIRST COMMUNION

As a result, when her name was called the following morning, Lucia strode confidently up to the priest who caressed her and informed her that she was to wait until she was seven before receiving the sacrament. Heartbroken, Lucia immediately burst into tears and, sobbing, laid her head on the knees of the priest. It so happened that Fr. Francisco Cruz, S.J., a Jesuit missionary from Lisboa who had been requested to assist with confessions, arrived at the church at that exact moment and asked Lucia why she was crying. Between sobs, she managed to tell the saintly priest what had happened. The tall, fifty-year old cleric led Lucia to the sacristy and performed his own examination on the catechism and the mystery of the Eucharist. After he did this, he took Lucia by the hand and brought her directly to the parish priest, saying, "Father Pena, you can let this child go to Communion. She understands what she's doing better than many of the others." Fr. Pena objected noting that Lucia was but six years of age. "Never mind! I'll take responsibility for that," Fr. Cruz said. Turning to Lucia he said, "All right then, go and tell your mother that you are making your First Communion tomorrow."^[16] Lucia was ecstatic. She ran home to tell her mother, clapping her hands with delight along the way. Also overjoyed at the news, Maria Rosa immediately began to prepare Lucia for the required first confession she was about to make.

AFTERNOON

THE DAY BEFORE FIRST COMMUNION

Shortly after Noon, Maria Rosa accompanied her youngest daughter to church so she could make her First Confession, a prerequisite to receiving the sacrament of First Communion. Lucia now had a bond of sorts with the saintly Fr. Cruz and told her mother that she wanted to confess to him rather

than to Fr. Pena. Without objection, they made their way to the sacristy where Fr. Cruz was stationed at a portable confessional. The two knelt in front of the high altar outside the sacristy door and Maria Rosa gave Lucia her final recommendations as the two waited with some of the other mothers for Lucia's turn to come.

Upon entering the sacristy, Lucia dutifully knelt at the feet of the Lord, represented in the person of the priest. She recounted her sins and asked forgiveness. After listening to her youthful transgressions and petition, Fr. Cruz said, "My child, your soul is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Keep it always pure, so that He will be able to carry on His divine action within it." On hearing these words, Lucia felt herself filled with respect for her soul, and asked the kind confessor what she ought to do. "Kneel down there before Our Lady and ask her, with great confidence, to take care of your heart, to prepare it to receive Her Beloved Son worthily tomorrow, and to keep it for Him alone!"

Feeling transformed, Lucia stood and exited the sacristy only to find those waiting outside laughing heartily. Paying them little attention, the child made her way over to her favorite statue of Our Lady. Now within the church there are several statues of Mary, but Lucia generally prayed before the one that stood at the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary because that altar was maintained by her sisters. She went there on this special occasion as well to ask with all the ardor of her soul, to keep her poor heart for God alone. She repeated this humble prayer many times with her eyes fixed on the statue. It seemed to Lucia that the Blessed Mother smiled and, "with a loving look and kindly gesture, assured her that she would. Lucia's heart was overflowing with joy, and she could scarcely utter a single word."

As Lucia finished the recitation of her prayers, Maria Rosa quickly motioned for her to come, and as the two exited the church, Maria Rosa turned to Lucia saying, "My child, don't you know that confession is a secret matter and that it is made in a low voice? Everybody heard you! There was only one thing nobody heard; that is what you said at the end." Maria Rosa made several attempts to ascertain her daughter's final words at confession as they walked home, but Lucia would divulge not a word. Nor did she tell of her experience before the Blessed Mother.^[17]

EVENING

THE DAY BEFORE FIRST COMMUNION

Lucia's sisters labored into the night making her a white dress and a wreath of flowers for the next day. Though needing her rest for the following day, the excitement prevented Lucia from sleeping as well, and she counted each passing minute. Frequently throughout the night she rose to ask her sisters if she could help or try on the dress. Eventually, she slept.

9:00 AM – FIRST COMMUNION DAY

Morning finally arrived in Aljustrel not unlike every other day, but things were abuzz in the dos Santos household. Lucia rose early and slipped into her white dress. In accordance with custom, her sister Maria took Lucia to the kitchen to ask the pardon of her parents, kiss their hands and ask their blessing. Following this ritualistic ceremony, Maria Rosa gave Lucia her last recommendations on what to ask of God on this special day, adding that once she received the Lord, Lucia should ask Him to make her a saint.

These words so impressed Lucia that she vowed to make them the first she would say to Jesus after receiving Him, and the dos Santos family left home for the church. Lucia's brother Manuel carried her the entire way to prevent her white dress from becoming soiled by the dust of the road. As soon as they arrived at the church, Lucia ran to kneel before the altar of Our Lady to renew her petition. She remained in prayer until her sisters came to take her to her appointed place.

The first communion class consisted of many children and as instructed they formed four lines according to size; two lines of boys and two of girls. They stretched from the back of the church to the altar rails with tiny Lucia being at the front, the position nearest the angels that guarded the step by the altar rails.

APPROXIMATELY 11:00 AM FIRST COMMUNION DAY

As the Missa Cantata began, Lucia's heart was aflutter in expectation of the visit of the almighty God who was about to descend from Heaven to unite Himself to her poor soul. As the parish priest made his way through the rows of children to distribute the Body and Blood of the Risen Lord, Lucia

was first to step forward. Her heart pounded in her chest as she offered the priest her tongue.

No sooner had he placed the small white Host on her tongue than she felt “an unalterable serenity and peace.” Lucia felt herself bathed in such a supernatural atmosphere that the presence of our dear Lord became as clearly perceptible to her as if she had seen and heard Him with her bodily senses. Recalling the admonitions of both her mother and Fr. Cruz she whispered, “O Lord, make me a saint, Keep my heart always pure, for You alone.” Then, from the depths of her own heart she felt Jesus very distinctly saying “The grace granted to you this day will remain living in your soul, producing fruits of eternal life.” Lucia felt as though she had been transformed in God.”^[18]

APPROXIMATELY 1:00 PM FIRST COMMUNION DAY

Due to the late arrival of priests travelling great distances to participate in the First Communion ceremonies, a lengthy sermon offered by Fr. Pena and the renewal of baptismal vows, it was nearly 1:00 PM before the ceremony concluded. All the children left the church with their families “separated into little groups, shouting, talking, running, some munching on pieces of bread their mothers had brought.”^[19] Lucia, however, remained in the church kneeling at the altar. Her mother was concerned that the child might faint for lack of food, and retrieved her to take her home.

But Lucia had been transformed! She told her mother once home that she was “filled to overflowing with the Bread of Angels” and unable to eat a thing. In fact, Lucia had momentarily lost the desire for all the worldly things, and felt at home only in some solitary place where, all alone, she “could recall the delights of my First Communion.”^[20] In fact, in the many days that followed, others noticed that Lucia seemed almost dazed as she went about her daily routine.

THE DAYS FOLLOWING FIRST COMMUNION

Regardless of her desire to remain alone in prayer, moments of solitude were rare for Lucia as life’s routine resumed. Lucia and her sisters were entrusted with the daily care of the neighborhood children whose

parents worked the fields. Maria Rosa's work as a nurse advising ill neighbors who stopped by the house or visiting the homes of those more seriously ill cast further responsibility on Lucia. Her duties required that Maria Rosa spend entire days and some nights with the sick and infirmed when the illness was prolonged or their conditions required it. This happened more than anyone liked and even Lucia's sisters were from time to time pressed into "day care" duty to give the family of the infirmed some respite.

If an infirmed woman had small children, the children were sometimes taken to Lucia's house to provide the quiet needed for the recovery of the sick person. Whenever this happened, Lucia was charged with keeping those children occupied, something she did with games or lessons in preparing the yarn for weaving. Maria and Carolina typically had several girls in the house for instructions in weaving and dressmaking. Though this was burdensome for the dos Santos family, the visitors always enjoyed the experience and would often recount how the days spent at Lucia's house were "the best days of their lives."^[21]

On days in which Lucia's sisters were required to work in the fields, their weaving and sewing obligations were tended to at night. On a typical night, the family would enjoy a good dinner followed by prayers that were led by Antonio. Then the entire family took their "work" positions. Maria went to the loom, Antonio filled the spools, Teresa and Gloria took to their sewing and Maria Rosa began spinning. Lucia and Carolina, after tidying up in the kitchen, helped with sewing, basting, attaching buttons and so on. To ward off drowsiness, Lucia's brother Manuel would play the concertina while the rest of the family sang all kinds of songs.

Neighbors would often stop by to keep the family company while they worked and although it meant losing sleep, the gaiety would fill them with happiness and reduce their worries and fears, even if only for the moment. Many were envious of the closeness of the dos Santos family, often remarking how fortunate Maria Rosa is that God blessed her with such lovely children. At harvest time the family would reap the corn under the moonlight. Lucia, from her perch atop the corn pile, was chosen to provide a round of hugs each time a dark-colored corn cob appeared.^[22]

1914

SPRING AND SUMMER

From the security of her own yard, Lucia loved to watch the splendid colors emanating from the rising sun and very much enjoyed the evenings, lying on her back by the well at the end of her plentiful back yard gazing up at the emerging stars as the sunlight faded into darkness. Her cousins, Francisco and Jacinta, sometimes joined Lucia on such evenings. Jacinta often tried to count the stars as they emerged, spying them from between the branches of the olive tree that swayed to the silent melody of a gentle summer breeze. Eventually, they were just too numerous to track however. Lucia referred to them as the lamps of angels and the moon she called the lamp of Our Lady. Naturally the sun became known as the lamp of Our Lord. That was Francisco's favorite, but Jacinta thought it too blinding and preferred the soft light of Our Lady's lamp.

FALL 1914 AND WINTER 1914-1915

The fond remembrance of these summer nights was soon replaced, however, with the "invisible poison.... of discontent" as Lucia's father Antonio began to spend more and more time with newfound friends found in some of the roadside taverns of Aljustrel. His drinking caused havoc for the entire family and, as can be imagined, had a deleterious effect on not only "his fields and his cattle, his self-respect and his old age, but also the health and good-humor of his wife and children."^[23] It now became necessary for Maria Rosa to work many days and nights, sometimes overnight for many days at a time, as a domestic nurse. Mother's absence meant that the older daughters, in addition to working as a seamstress and weaver, had to assume the responsibilities for maintaining the house and, Manuel, the fields. Caroline had pastured the sheep in a variety of fields owned by the family, but now at thirteen, was forced to earn money as a weaver. And then there was little Lucia.

1915 EARLY SPRING

The robust displays of affection enjoyed by Lucia up to this point in her life would begin to weaken in the ensuing months as events beyond her control would subject her to immense suffering and hardship. Adversities far

greater than any young child should have to endure.

In spring 2015, when Lucia was just seven years old, Maria Rosa decided that it was time for her to take over the care of the sheep. The flock was large and the responsibility awesome for a child of seven. Lucia was essentially to become responsible for the safety and welfare of the entire flock, grazing the animals, herding them to areas of good forage and keeping a watchful eye out for plants that might be toxic to sheep. Pastures, which could be as far as a mile or two in distance, had to be continuously alternated as the sheep diminished the food source at any particular location. Weather conditions also impact the pasture chosen as the availability of a good water supply for the sheep as well as shelter from the elements for the shepherd must all be considered. In addition to these tasks, Lucia, from dawn to dusk, would need to keep a watchful eye out for predators that might try harm the sheep. In addition to some wild species, even domestic dogs might be included in the category of aggressor.

Despite her father's objections, and those of her sisters, Maria Rosa would make no exceptions for Lucia. "She's just like the rest," she said. "Carolina is already almost thirteen years old. That means she can now begin to work in the fields, or else, learn to be a weaver or a seamstress, whichever she prefers." Consequently, Maria Rosa believed that care of the flock is a responsibility that must be given to Lucia.

Lucia was enthralled with the prospect of working as a shepherdess. It made her feel grown up, like her sisters, and seemed at the time more like a new adventure than a responsibility. She had no way of knowing that the experience would alter her life forever.

Word of the "new shepherd" spread quickly throughout the village and almost all the other children offered Lucia companionship. She accepted all the offers and arranged to meet each on the slopes of the Serra the next day.

Lucia's euphoria was also Francisco's and Jacinta's heartbreak. They were losing a playmate, someone who entertained them with her stories. They in turn pleaded with their mother to be allowed to shepherd the Marto sheep as well, but at the tender ages six and four, Olimpia would not hear of it.

The following morning Lucia arrived on the Serra with her flock to find a large corpus of sheep with their shepherds.^[24] The mass of sheep and people made Lucia very uncomfortable. She promptly chose from the group of shepherds three companions with whom she would share a pasture. They

included Teresa Matias and her sister Maria Rosa, and Maria Justino who was from Casa Velha. Without saying a word to anyone, the four girls arranged to pasture their sheep on the opposite slopes, and journeyed off in that direction.

Before long, Lucia learned that once the sheep found a suitable grazing spot, they would congregate and remain for hours, allowing the young shepherds time to play games and enjoy at least part of the long day. She also soon discovered where some of those choice grazing spots were and would direct the flock there. Along the stone walls of a long winding road leading to the intersection with the highway leading from Ourem to Leiria lay the shallow waters of the Loagoa, though Lucia called it the mud-hole or barreiro. It was a place where women and children would come from all around to launder their clothes. It also turned out to be a most suitable water supply for the sheep. Many times, Lucia would meet her young shepherd friends there and, once the sheep were watered, would take them in a group to graze in a pasture.

The barreiro was about a mile from Aljustrel and was situated just about at the midway point between Lucia's home and a pasture called Cova da Iria that was owned by her family. That was a favorite place to pasture and play.

APRIL – OCTOBER 1915, MIDDAY

This was essentially Lucia's daily routine throughout many of the days of spring and summer until one day when Lucia's little band of shepherds set out in the direction of a hill known as the Cabeco. They took to the northern slope, climbing with their flocks almost to the top. There they were surrounded by a "wide expanse of trees – olives, oaks, pines, holm oaks, and others that stretched away down towards the level valley below."^[25] The location offered beautiful panoramic views.

Around midday, the children had just finished eating their lunch while sitting on the rocks along the ridge at Cabeco and Lucia invited her companions to pray the Rosary with her. The other three children eagerly agreed and had hardly begun when, there before their eyes, they "saw a figure poised in the air above the trees; One of the other children noticed it first, this statue-like figure that looked as if it could be made of snow, rendered almost transparent by the rays of the sun." Frightened, one of her companions yelled,

“What is that?” “I don’t know!” a confused Lucia responded. The girls continued to pray, but their eyes remained fixed on the figure before them until they finished their prayers. Then, just as quickly as it appeared, the figure disappeared, without having uttered a sound.

As was typical of Lucia, she resolved to say nothing of the vision, but her companions told their families what had happened the very moment they reached home. The news soon spread throughout the village and one day when Lucia arrived home, her mother questioned her intensely. “Look here!” she said. “They say you’ve seen I don’t know what, up there. What was it you saw?” “I don’t know,” Lucia replied as she had no explanation of what she saw. “It looked like a person wrapped up in a sheet!” the child continued. She meant to say that she couldn’t discern its features, but instead added, “You couldn’t make out any eyes, or hands, on it.” Maria Rosa put an end to the whole matter with a dismissive hand wave of disgust, “Childish nonsense!” she said.^[26]

The following year Lucia and her companions returned with their flocks to the same hilltop and the figure appeared again. As they had before, the other children reported to their parents what they had seen. Still later, the figure appeared to them a third time and as with the first two apparitions, the other children spoke openly of the incident.

After hearing from others in the village about the strange visions experienced by Lucia and her companions, Maria Rosa became quite disturbed. She called Lucia and demanded an explanation of what had taken place. “I don’t know, Mother. I don’t know what it is,” Lucia insisted. Some of the neighborhood children began mocking Lucia. Even her sisters would ask, when Lucia seemed distant in thought, if she had seen someone wrapped in a sheet. The scorn and ridicule was foreign to Lucia who, until now, enjoyed nothing but caresses and positive attention from all she knew. She could not have envisioned “what the good Lord had in store for [her] in the future.”^[27]

1916

Around this time, having grown a bit more, and after constant pestering their mother for permission, Olimpia finally consented to Jacinta and Francesco taking care of their own flock of sheep. It’s possible that Olimpia wanted to do something that might help Jacinta overcome the

immense disappointment she felt at the refusal of Fr. Pena to grant her permission to make her First Communion at age six as Lucia had. Jacinta had studied hard and felt prepared for the testing. She referred to the Host as the Hidden Jesus and wanted desperately to receive him at Communion. But it was not to be, as after his examination of Jacinta, Fr. Pena's "thought the child too young and unprepared" to receive the sacrament. Jacinta grieved and her disappointment could not be disguised. Yet, it was not in her nature to brood for too long over something and the news given by Olimpia caused in Jacinta so much joy that she, with Francisco in tow, ran to Lucia's house to tell her the great news. [\[28\]](#)

Lucia loved her cousins and enjoyed spending some time with them at play, but the thought of being with them from dusk to dawn, seven days per week, is not a concept she particularly relished. Yet, perhaps thinking that the change of companionship would be good or maybe out of a sense of familial obligation, Lucia agreed to spend her time with Jacinta and Francisco, to the exclusion of the other young shepherds, in the pasturing of their flocks.

SPRING – APRIL OR MAY

As noted earlier most of Europe, as was much of the balance of the world, was in disarray, but in the spring of 1916, some remote and inaccessible places had not yet been too impacted. So, life in the Serra da Aire went about pretty much as it did before the start of the great war. To the peasants of such regions, the amount of rainfall and the price of wool are of far greater concern than the change of leadership in remote governments of the world. Those priorities didn't change even when Portugal officially entered World War I on March 9, 1916. Not even the government leaders in Portugal heeded Pope Benedict XV when just a few days prior he called for "all men of good will to have recourse to prayer and mortification rather than hatred," warning of the "ruin that would come to all Europe if his words were not heeded." With spring came planting time and that was a priority to the farmers of Aljustrel. [\[29\]](#)

For the three little shepherd children of Fatima nothing mattered except taking their sheep to pasture and enjoying the games and laughter that the late morning and afternoon would bring. Generally, after settling into a suitable pasture for the flock, the children would entertain themselves for

hours playing games. Outgrowing the more childish games of “Buttons” and “Pass the Ring,” the three children found greater enjoyment these days in playing cards. They routinely carried two packs, one from Lucia’s house and another from the Marto abode. Games such as “Dressing the Queen” and “Sobering up the King” now occupied a greater portion of their time. They also enjoyed singing and dancing and Jacinta loved to chase butterflies and pick wild flowers.

The children would take a break from their games long enough to eat lunch, enjoy an afternoon snack and say the Rosary. As did all good Catholics, the three little shepherds would always kneel while saying the Rosary, but over time, they discovered a way to abbreviate the long prayer by reducing each individual prayer to a recitation of the title only, thus freeing up more time for afternoon games. And that’s how it was as the spring turned to summer.

EARLY SUMMER – JUNE

The cousins had been caring for their parent’s sheep for some time now and had settled into a routine. Nothing much changed from day to day and there was generally nothing extraordinary to report from their time at pasture. That all changed on one warm, sun-drenched day of summer 1916.

The children met as usual and led their sheep just west of Aljustrel to Chousa Velha, a piece of land owned by Lucia’s father on the eastern slope of Cabeco hill. The sheep grazed as the shepherds played their games.

ABOUT 10:00 AM

The powder blue morning sky was now overcast. It happened rather suddenly and without immediate notice, but soon it was raining, more of a fine, refreshing mist really. Within minutes, a cold breeze began to blow, a sure sign that a storm was moving in rather fast. The children moved swiftly up the side of the hill to the south of the valley prodding the sheep along the way. Reaching Cabeco, a rocky crest of the southern slope, they guided the sheep to the security of an olive grove while sheltering themselves in a cave cut in the nearby rocks. The “cave” was more of a large overhanging rock that offered enough space underneath to provide shelter from most rain storms or heavy winds blowing from the north or northwest. Lucia was

somewhat familiar with the area because it was owned by her godfather Anastacio.

From that vantage point Lucia noticed that she could see the little village in which she was born, her parents' home, and the hamlets of Casa Velha and Eira da Pedra. An olive grove that was owned by several people extended right to the confines of the two hamlets. The three children continued to play their games, ate lunch and knelt to pray the Rosary. No sooner had they finished praying when the rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun. The breaking clouds once again exposed the hot sun and the children tossed small stones toward the valley below.

This activity gave way to another strong gust of wind that bent the tree tops as never before. The children looked up startled to see what was happening as it had been unusually calm just moments prior. As they looked skyward, they noticed a light approaching from the west. The light moved closer settling over an olive tree at the entrance of the cave. The children could discern a figure not unlike the one Lucia had seen previously while playing with her other companions. Neither six-year old Jacinta nor her eight-year old brother Francisco had seen the apparition before and Lucia hadn't ever mentioned the prior visions to them.

Lucia noticed, unlike her prior encounter, that this vision had distinguishable features about it. It was a young man, maybe fourteen or fifteen years of age. Whiter than snow in appearance the boy seemed to be transparent allowing the sun to shine right through him. And it was beautiful! Upon coming to rest in front and slightly above them the vision spoke. "Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me." The Angel fell to his knees and bowed down until his forehead touched the ground. He asked the children to three times repeat, "My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You! I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love you." The Angel then rose to his feet and said "Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications." As he said these words, the Angel left them.

During the time of the apparition, the children were in a trance-like state, almost unaware of their own existence. That state of ecstasy remained a long time as the children continued to kneel in prayer following the Angel's departure. It was Francesco who finally broke the trance noting that he had to stand as the prostrate position was hurting his back. Standing, they all felt weak and still somewhat dazed. They were still incredulous and excited as

they collected their sheep and Lucia warned Francisco and Jacinta to say nothing about this vision to anyone. She was keenly aware of the end result when such things are reported to unbelieving town folk. Fortunately, her cousins complied.^[30]

JUNE – JULY

As can be imagined, this event was a transformative experience for the three children and The Angel's words, Lucia noted, "engraved themselves so deeply" in their minds, that they "could never forget them." In the days and weeks that followed, the three "seers" spent long periods of time in prayer, repeating the Angel's words and mimicking his prostrate position until exhaustion overtook them.

More than once the children wondered who the Angel of Peace was and why he chose to appear to them. There are many Angels in the Catholic tradition and within their ranks there is a hierarchical structure. Catholics learn that Angels, though mentioned frequently in the Bible, tend to appear with less regularity and do frequently speak to those that see them. The Bible teaches that Tobias was guided by the Archangel Raphael, the Angel of health, joy and travelers. It was Archangel Gabriel that appeared to Mary with news that she would give birth to the Savior of the world. But only Archangel Michael is known in Catholic tradition as the Angel of Peace. Ironically, Michael is the same heavenly warrior who is credited with casting Lucifer and his followers from heaven. Could it be that it was Michael who appeared to the children of Fatima?

JULY OR AUGUST

The sweltering heat of summer remained and the children continued each day to take the sheep to pasture and to repeat the prayer of the Angel. On this particular day, one of the hottest days of the summer, the children took the sheep home to provide them some respite from the intense heat during the hours of their siesta, following which the children went to the old well at the bottom of the garden behind Lucia's home. There, in an area they called Arneiro, they could play in the shade of some fig trees.

There was no approaching light, no warning at all, but when the children looked, the Angel stood there beside them. "What are you doing?" he asked. "Pray, pray very much! The most holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary

have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High.” The children were puzzled by this but only Lucia had the courage to ask, “How are we to make sacrifices?” “Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission, the suffering which the Lord will send you.”^[31] Completing his words, the Angel vanished. As had happened a few weeks earlier, the children remained in a state of ecstasy, praying for some time after the Angel’s departure. Like the first sitting, Francisco had seen the Angel, but could not hear his voice, so later that day he asked what the Angel had said. Lucia and Jacinta explained it to him. “But how can we suffer?” he asked. “We’re not sick. We have enough to eat, and a place to live.” Francisco would soon learn the meaning of the Angel’s message when his oldest brother was called to serve in World War I. Even 7-year old Jacinta grasped the meaning. She was “depressed by the worry at home and stories of death on the battlefield, as well as the trouble that had come to Lucia’s family when her father began to spend all his money in the wine shops.” Stretching out her arms she would cry out, “Lord, we offer Thee all these sufferings for the conversion of poor sinners.”^[32]

LATE SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER

Even with the passage of several more weeks, the three visionaries could not forget the angelic visions that had left such an indelible mark on them. As much as they wished they could spend the days in prayer and remembrance, they still needed to tend to their responsibilities as shepherds. So, at summer’s end, the children found themselves once again pasturing the sheep on property belonging to Lucia’s parents. This particular pasture was another slope of the hill called Chousa Velha a little higher up than Vilinhos in the olive grove of Pregueira.

The children finished their lunch and made their way to a hollow among the rocks on the opposite side of the hill. This area was accessible only by rounding the slope and climbing over some rocks above the Pregueira. The climb was difficult for the children, but perhaps more so for the sheep that struggled greatly to follow their little shepherds. As soon as

they arrived and placed the flock in a suitable place to graze, they fell to their knees and prostrated themselves with foreheads touching the ground. They were reciting the prayer of the Angel when “an extraordinary light shone upon” them. The children jumped up to see what it was and saw, for the third time, the vision of the Angel. In his left hand, the Angel of Peace held a chalice over which was suspended a Host. From the Host beads of blood dripped into the chalice below. The Angel knelt beside the children leaving the chalice suspended in the air. As he did this he asked the children to repeat three times; *“Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly, and I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference with which He Himself is offended. And, through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners.”* “Then, rising, the Angel took the chalice and the Host in his hands.” He gave the Sacred Host to Lucia, and shared the Blood from the chalice between Jacinta and Francisco who had not yet received their First Communion. As the Angel put the chalice to their lips He said, *“Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.”*^[33]

The Angel once again prostrated himself as did the children. Together they repeated three more times the prayer with the Angel. The Angel departed them leaving the children in a state of ecstasy. The intensity of the experience, sensing the actual presence of God, left them weak and drained of all energy. Francisco was the first of the three to return to reality and informed the others that it was near dark. It took all their strength to gather the flock and make the trek down the hill and back home. They walked in silence for a long while until Francisco finally broke the silence noting, “I like very much to see the Angel, but the worst of it is that afterwards we can’t do anything. I can’t even walk. I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

It was a few days before the children regained their energy and felt normal again. Francisco asked Lucia, “The Angel gave you Holy Communion. But what was it that he gave me and Jacinta?” “It was Holy Communion,” Jacinta said quickly before Lucia had a chance to respond. “Didn’t you see that it was the Blood that fell from the Host?” “I felt that God was in me,” Francisco continued. “But I didn’t know how it was.” Then, prostrating himself on the ground, Francisco repeated the second prayer of

the Angel, and remained there in prayer for a long time. Thus, Lucia later noted that Francisco and Jacinta, though not having yet received their First Communion, regarded this as their sacramental Communion.^[34]

So much had taken place in Lucia's life and in that of her cousins following the glorious day of her First Holy Communion. Life between the ages of seven and ten had been eventful for her to say the least, but little did she know that God's divine plan for her and her cousins would alter their lives and impact the faith of millions more. The visions of the Angel of Portugal and his message had separated the three children from their playmates but perhaps more importantly, it prepared them for the apparitions and the suffering to come.^[35]

PART III
NOTHING WILL EVER BE THE
SAME

1917

The changes in the lives of the three little shepherd children were not the only changes taking place in Fatima. Fr. Pena no longer served the Church of St. Anthony, having been replaced by Reverend Father Coicinha whose actual name was Fr. Manuel Marques Ferreira. Fr. Ferreira was most zealous and preached against the pagan custom of endless dancing, something that had been all too common in the parish.

He spoke so incessantly about the evils of the custom that Maria Rosa forbade Lucia's sisters to attend any further amusements. Some in the neighborhood questioned the wisdom of a new priest suddenly classifying dancing as the devil's work, but Maria Rosa was steadfast in her obedience to the priest and her children attended the dances no more.

Soon many other area children, following the example set by the dos Santos sisters, began to refrain from such amusements causing the custom to gradually die out. Those who loved to dance as much as Lucia and Jacinta found the prohibition unpleasant. Maria Rosa, however, did allow for some dancing in the home as Fr. Ferreira found no sin in that.^[36]

There were several other changes impacting the dos Santos home too. It was also during this time that Maria and Teresa, the oldest of Lucia's sisters, married and left home. Her father Antonio fell into bad company and began to drink, causing the family to lose some of their property. His dislike for the new parish priest also caused him to leave St. Anthony's for a time and fulfil his Catholic obligations in Vila Nova de Ourem.

The loss of Antonio's productivity caused the family livelihood to diminish forcing Maria Rosa to send Lucia's other sisters, Gloria and Carolina to work as servants. The confluence of these three factors; Antonio's diminished capacity to provide, Lucia's two eldest sisters no longer living at home, and Gloria and Carolina working out of the home, caused all domestic responsibilities to fall to the only three that remained. Consequently, Lucia's brother Manuel was charged with caring for the few remaining fields and Lucia with pasturing the sheep while Maria Rosa took care of the house.

During this time Lucia's mother was clearly distressed. When gathered around the fire in the evening, waiting for Antonio to return for supper, Maria Rosa would stare at the empty places at the dinner table once occupied by Maria and Teresa and proclaim through her tears, "My God,

where has all the joy of our home gone?” Manuel and Lucia would weep with her as Lucia was heartbroken with sorrow.

During these times, Lucia would take comfort in the Angel’s words; “*Above all, accept submissively the sacrifices that the Lord will send you,*” and she would escape to a solitary place, generally at the well at the end of the garden so her mother would not be more distressed by Lucia’s own sadness. There, she would fall to her knees and peer into the well as she leaned over the edge of the stone slabs that covered it. Lucia’s tears fell softly into the well mingling with the waters below as she offered her suffering to God. Sometimes Francisco and Jacinta would stop by and find Lucia in distress, unable to speak because of her sobbing. Her cousins would share Lucia’s grief weeping themselves until Jacinta offered out loud, “My God, it is as an act of reparation, and for the conversion of sinners, that we offer You all these sufferings and sacrifices.”

It wasn’t long before Maria Rosa started to experience a deterioration of her own health because of her immense distress forcing her to ask that her daughter Gloria return home to help care for her and the house. Despite consultations with surgeons and doctors and “recourse to every kind of remedy,” there was no improvement in Maria Rosa’s condition.

One day, Fr. Ferreira offered to take her to Leiria in his mule cart where she would be able to consult with additional doctors. Lucia’s sister Teresa accompanied them on the trip, but her mother grew so weary from the number of consultations and the arduous journey, that she arrived home “half dead.”

Fortunately, a surgeon from Sao Mamede, a civil parish in the municipality of Lisbon about 67 miles south of Fatima, was able to at least provide a diagnosis of what ailed Maria Rosa. He recommended treatment for a cardiac lesion, a dislocated spinal vertebra and fallen kidneys. He prescribed some medication that seemed to bring about a bit of improvement to her health granting her at least some relief.

Also during this time, Manuel became of age for enlistment in the army of Portugal. With his excellent health and the ravages of World War I in full swing, it seemed sure that he would be drafted into service. Manuel’s godfather promised Maria Rosa that he would obtain an exemption because of their extraordinary family circumstances and he contacted the doctor responsible for Manuel’s medical examination. Despite Manuel’s godfather’s good intentions, Maria Rosa feared Manuel’s loss from the family and

quickly sent for Carolina to return home to help look after the land. By the grace of God, however, the exemption was granted, much to the relief Maria Rosa.

SUNDAY MAY 13, 1917

Such were the events of the world and the condition of Lucia's family as Sunday, May 13, 1917 dawned. The day was bright and fair like so many others before it and following Mass in Fatima, Lucia and her cousins met at the barreiro, as they usually did, to choose a site from which to pasture their flocks. On this day, they selected a pasture of land belonging to her parents, a place called Cova da Iria. The distance from Lucia's home to this site was over a mile and the journey required that the children and their sheep cross a barren stretch of moorland where the sheep took every opportunity to graze along the way, making the journey that much longer.^[37] The length of the journey seemed irrelevant, however, because since the last appearance of the Angel, the children were more somber, deeper in prayer and sacrifice, and less interested in playing, dancing, singing, picking flowers and chasing butterflies.

12:00 NOON

At about Noon the three children arrived high up on the slope in the Cova da Iria, a pasture containing little more than a spattering of assorted trees. There, the sheep continued to graze^[38] and the children busied themselves gathering some of the scattered rocks to build a little stone wall that they could use as an enclosure around a clump of furze on which the sheep grazed. Suddenly a bright shaft of light pierced the air. It was so bright that it appeared to the children as a flash of lightning. Frightened by the flash, Lucia suggested that they make their way home to avoid the oncoming storm. Despite the clear sundrenched sky, and with the absence of even a hint of a breeze, the children began to descend the hill hurrying the sheep along towards the road. When about halfway down the hill, almost level with a large holm oak tree that stood there, there was another flash of lightning. Now, even more alarmed, the children continued to scurry down the slope. They had moved only about another hundred yards when they came upon a small holm oak directly in front of them. Looking up the children saw a

figure standing over the foliage of the small tree. According to Lucia, “a Lady dressed all in white, more brilliant than the sun, shedding rays of light, clear and stronger than a crystal glass filled with the most sparkling water, pierced the burning rays of the sun.”

The cork oak, and not the holm oak, is a tree more typically found in Portugal. The holm oak is a very tall evergreen that grows up to 85 feet in height despite its turgid, grey, short and winding stem. It has alternating, very hard, elliptical bright green leaves that are whiter below. It produces yellow flowers and a green acorn that is very bitter to the taste and turns dark brown at maturity. The tree over which the figure stood, however, was apparently a very young tree, rather small in size reaching only about three feet in height.

The children stopped in their tracks just feet from the Lady. Her face was beautiful, indescribably so, bearing neither a smile nor a frown, but rather appearing very serious. She seemed to be about seventeen.^[39] Around Her neck was a chord that fell to about the waist at the end of which was a little ball of light. Her hands were clasped as in prayer and were held about breast high. Rosary beads were draped around her fingers. She wore a simple tunic under a mantle or veil, each falling to her feet. The tunic had no collar and no cuffs. The mantle had a ray of sunlight all around it and displayed a star. There was no cincture or sash around the waist, although the tunic was drawn in at that point.^[40]

The entire figure was a brilliant light, white light for the most part except the face and hands which appeared as a flesh-color light. Below the mantle a yellow light encircled her. The light that shone from the Lady, particularly from her face, was so fierce that the children could not stare without hurting their eyes. They were bathed in the light that radiated from her and astounded as they stood before the Apparition.

Without providing even a chance to allow the children to comprehend what they were seeing, the Lady spoke to them in a low, almost melodic voice, saying, “*Do not be afraid. I will do you no harm.*” “Where are you from?” Lucia asked. “*I am from Heaven,*” the beautiful lady replied, gently raising her hand towards the distant horizon. “What do you want of me?” Lucia intoned. “*I came to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the thirteenth day, at this same hour. Later on I will tell you who I am and what I want. Afterwards, I will return here yet a seventh time.*” Lucia asked, “Shall I go to heaven too?” “Yes, you will.” “And Jacinta?” “She

will go also.' 'And Francisco?' *'He will go there too, but he must say many Rosaries.'* Lucia then remembered two of her friends who used to come to her house to learn weaving from her eldest sister. They had recently died and Lucia inquired, 'Is Maria das Neves in Heaven?' Maria was only sixteen when she died. 'Yes *she is,*' the Lady answered. 'And Amelia?' Lucia continued. 'She is in purgatory until the end of the world.'" Amelia was about 18-20 years old when she died. Then the Lady asked, 'Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?' 'Yes, we are willing,' said Lucia. 'Then you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort.' As She said these words, She opened her hands for the first time imparting on the children an intense light that streamed from her hands. The rays of that light seemed to penetrate their hearts and touch the innermost depths of their souls.

Then, as if moved by an inner feeling that was also communicated to them through the light, the children fell to their knees and silently repeated, "O most Holy Trinity, I adore You! My God, my God, I love You in the most Blessed Sacrament!"

A few moments passed and the Lady said, 'Pray the Rosary every day, in order to obtain peace for the world, and the end of the war.' The Woman then began to serenely rise and moved eastward until she disappeared into the air. Just like that she was gone!^[41]

As the children walked home after the apparition, they recounted the splendor of the experience they had just shared. Unable to contain herself, little Jacinta kept breaking into enthusiastic exclamations saying, "Oh, what a beautiful Lady!" Lucia, however, recalled the hardships created when her other friends spoke openly about the vision of the boy and warned Jacinta that her enthusiasm might cause her to break the vow they made earlier to keep their visions secret causing her to tell others what had taken place this day. Jacinta, for her part, told Lucia not to worry and promised that she would tell no one.

Francisco and Jacinta returned home to a houseful of people, including their own siblings and their Uncle Antonio da Silva, but their parents, who had taken the carriage into town earlier that morning, had not yet returned home. Dinner cooked on the stove and the daylight began to fade when Jacinta, who meant to keep the secret, heard the sound of the carriage

that signaled the return of her parents from the market where they had just purchased a pig. Jacinta ran to greet them hugging her mother at the knees as she exited the carriage. “Mother, I saw Our Lady today at Cova da Iria!” Olimpia laughed at what she assumed was a joke and brushed by to go into the house. But Jacinta followed close behind insisting that her story was true. She provided so much detail that Olimpia had to take her seriously. When her father came in from locking the newly-acquired pig in a shed, he sat by the fireplace and began to eat his supper. Olimpia sat beside him and recounted the story that Jacinta has shared. Manuel wanted to hear the story from Jacinta’s own lips and called her over. She happily told him exactly what she told Olimpia. Manuel turned to Francisco for confirmation, which was provided. Uncle Antonio looked at his brother-in-law saying, “Well, if the youngsters did see a lady dressed in white, who could it be but Our Lady?” Manuel knew in his heart that his children didn’t lie. He also knew that they were not playing a prank on him. After weighing the two accounts of events offered by Francisco and Jacinta, and after a careful evaluation of their body language as they told their story, and knowing that his children did not even know some of the words they attributed to the Lady, he announced his belief, saying, “From the beginning of the world, Our Lady has appeared many times in various ways. If the world is wicked, it would be much more so but for many such happenings. The power of God is great. We don’t know what this is, but it will turn out to be something.

MAY 14, 1917

Lucia awoke early on Monday morning and played under the fig tree until it was time to take the sheep to pasture. After some time, Lucia noticed her sister Maria approaching her and was taken aback when Maria said, “Oh, Lucia! I hear you have seen Our Lady at Cova da Iria. Is it true?” “Who told you,” Lucia demanded. Maria recounted that some neighbors informed her how Jacinta told their aunt Olimpia. Lucia told Maria that she didn’t say anything because she wasn’t sure who the Lady was. “It was a pretty little woman” who wants us to go for six consecutive months to the Cova. Only then will she tell us who she is and what she wants, Lucia told her.

Maria wasn’t buying any of it and returned to the house to tell Maria Rosa all that Lucia had told her. Lucia was promptly summoned to the house where her disbelieving parents grilled her with questions prior to Antonio’s

dismissal of the whole matter as “Silly woman’s tales.” Maria Rosa, however was quite disturbed and scolded Lucia. “To think I always brought my children up to speak the truth!” Maria Rosa lamented, “And now this one brings me a whopper like this!”^[42]

Francisco and Jacinta meanwhile waited for Lucia to arrive at their meeting spot. Francisco couldn’t wait to share with Lucia the news about Jacinta telling the secret. Unable to contain his excitement for another second, he ran to her the moment he saw her leading the sheep toward him, explaining as he did, how Jacinta had told her parents everything about the visions of the Lady the day prior. Jacinta listened silently as Francisco excitedly recounted nearly verbatim everything Jacinta said. Lucia was visibly upset. “You see, that’s just what I thought would happen.” Jacinta broke her silence. “There was something within me that wouldn’t let me keep quiet,” she said with tears in her eyes. “Well don’t cry now and don’t tell anything to anybody about what the Lady said to us,” Lucia continued. “But I already told them,” Jacinta said. “And what did you say?” Lucia asked. “I said that the Lady promised to take us to Heaven,” Jacinta replied. Lucia was incredulous thinking about the hardships this would cause. “To think you told them that!” she said. Jacinta sobbed even more saying, “Forgive me. I won’t tell anybody anything ever again!”^[43]

Reaching their destination at the pasture, Jacinta took a seat on a rock falling deep in thought. Remembering that the Lady told them to say the Rosary and make sacrifices for the conversion of sinners, she decided to refrain from their usual play. “From now on,” she informed the others, when we pray the Rosary, we must pray the whole Our Father and the whole Hail Mary.” Then, referring to the sacrifices, asked, “How are we going to make them?”^[44]

Francisco thought for a moment and offered, “Let’s give our lunch to the sheep, and make the sacrifice of doing without it.” In just a few minutes, their lunches were divided among the sheep who quickly diverted their attention from the grass on which they had been grazing. So on May 14, 1917, “the children fasted as strictly as the most austere Carthusian!”^[45]

Recalling that the Lady also told them that many sinners go to hell, Jacinta asked Lucia about it. Lucia explained the concept of hell to Jacinta as Maria Rosa had explained it to her. “It’s like a big deep pit of wild beasts,” Lucia explained, “with an enormous fire in it – and that’s where people go who commit sins and don’t confess them. They stay there and burn forever!”

Jacinta was intrigued with the concept of eternity. Her six-year old mind just could not grasp how something could go on forever without coming to an end.

For the balance of the day she obsessed about hell and asked Lucia a battery of questions. “And they never get out of there? But listen! Doesn’t hell end after many, many years, then? Those people burning in hell, don’t they ever die? And don’t they turn into ashes? And if people pray very much for sinners, won’t Our Lord get them out of there? And if they make sacrifices as well?” Finally, realizing there was no relief for the condemned souls, she relented, “Poor sinners! We have to pray and make many sacrifices for them!” Pondering the situation further Jacinta said, “How good Our Lady is! She has already promised to take us to Heaven!”

MAY 15 – 20, 1917

The word of the visions witnessed by the three children continued to spread throughout the village eventually reaching the parish priest who sent for the three children so that he could question them directly. Lucia and Francisco cooperated by answering the priest’s questions, but Jacinta hardly spoke. When she did break her silence, it was only with great hesitance and difficulty. As they left for home, Lucia asked why she didn’t answer any questions to which Jacinta responded, “Because I promised you never to tell anything to anybody again.”

Not even questioning by the parish priest, however, quelled the village talk and with each passing day, Lucia’s mother grew more and more upset at the things being said. Not even Maria Rosa’s anger could assuage the excitement felt deep within by the children. While all three believed fervently in the word spoken by the Lady of their vision, Jacinta seemed most enthusiastic in her desire to carry out every request made by the Lady on that fateful day. She reminded the others frequently that at the offering of each and every sacrifice they must be sure to “tell Jesus that it’s for the love of Him” that the sacrifice was being made. If at any time Lucia admitted that she failed to do so, Jacinta would say, “Then I’ll tell Him.” She would then join her hands, raise her eyes to heaven and say: “Oh Jesus, it is for the love of You, and for the conversion of sinners!”^[46]

Francisco seemed to relish his solitude more and more. One day in May he slipped away from Jacinta and Lucia, climbing to the top of a tall

rock formation. “You can’t come up here,” he yelled down upon being discovered, “Leave me alone.”^[47]

WEDNESDAY JUNE 13, 1917

APPROXIMATELY 5:00 AM

June 13th is the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua and for the faithful people of Aljustrel it is an important day. The Missa Cantata was being celebrated at St. Anthony’s Church at precisely 8:00 AM and it promised to be a full church. Lucia brought the sheep to pasture before sunrise so she could be back in time to attend. After a “good while” she noticed her brother Antonio running across the field toward her, informing her as he did, that several people were at the house asking to speak with her. Antonio agreed to watch the sheep for her as Lucia ran home to see who it was that wanted so urgently to see her.

On arrival, Lucia found many people from places as far as Minde, Carrascos and Boleiros among other villages on the other side of the mountains. They had all heard of the May apparition and the believers and curious alike wanted to accompany the children to Cova da Iria to check it out for themselves. Lucia was annoyed, but promised to allow them to accompany her to the Cova after she returned from the 8:00 Mass in Fatima. The crowd waited in her yard, much to the chagrin of Maria Rosa and her two elder daughters who ridiculed them for their folly. They waited for two hours for Lucia to return and then waited a bit longer for Lucia to ready herself.

11:00 AM

Lucia and the group of strangers finally departed for the Cova though Lucia felt very bitter. It was not so much any annoyance with the people that crowded the street, but rather the disdain and contempt she felt from her once loving family. Thinking back to the good times of the past as she walked along the dusty road, she wondered where the affection had gone. She began to cry as the strangers peppered her with many questions. Finally, she reached her cousins’ house.

Seeing Lucia’s red eyes and wet cheeks, Jacinta tried to reassure her with a reminder that “Surely these must be the sacrifices that the Angel said

God was going to send us. That is why you suffer – and to make reparation to Him, and to convert sinners!” Jacinta always had a way of putting things in perspective for Lucia who dried her eyes. The children and the strangers continued their thirty-minute or so journey to the Cova. Upon their arrival, the children were surprised to find another group of about fifty people waiting for them. This too was a diverse group from “Loureira, a little man from Lomba de Equa, others from Boleiros, Torres Novas, Anteiro; and then there was Maria Carreira and her daughters from Moita.”^[48]

At forty-six years of age, Maria Carreira, also known as Maria da Capelinha was married and had several children. She had been planning this trip for weeks after learning of the May apparitions from her husband who had been weeding a garden with Lucia’s father. It was just two or three days following the apparition that Antonio told Mr. Carreira who thought it was nonsense. While he didn’t believe it, he did bring the tale home to Maria who had a very different reaction. The Carreira’s had a crippled son John, who was “hunch-backed, with knees that crossed and knocked together as he walked.” Maria hoped for a cure for little John and vowed to make the pilgrimage to the Cova.

JUST BEFORE NOON

Lucia and her cousins approached the holm oak, stopping about nine feet short of it. Facing east, they sat to wait, Jacinta on one side of Lucia and Francisco on the other. Many in the group also sat and some passed bread and wine. The children refused the bread but did accept oranges that they held in their hands. Perhaps because of boredom or, possibly just to take her mind off the large crowd, Jacinta started to play, but on rather short order, Lucia made her stop. The low din of the crowd was disrupted by a girl from Boleiros who started praying loudly the prayers in her prayer book.

When she finished, the group completed five decades of the Rosary and the girl from Baleiros began to recite the Litany of Our Lady. Lucia stopped her though pointing out the lack of sufficient time. Then, as if startled by a revelation, Lucia stood and yelled, “Jacinta, there comes Our Lady! There is the light!”^[49] The children ran to the foot of the holm oak tree, and the group of people followed closely. The entire assembly knelt, some on the bushes and the gorse. The children looked upon the Face of Our Lady

who once again stood upon the holm oak tree. Some in the crowd were close enough to witness the branches at the top of the tree bend and curve as if under pressure. Others noted that the sun dimmed even though the sky was without clouds.

Lucia raised her hands toward the sky and broke the silence. “Your Excellency told me to come here, please say what you want of me” *“I wish you to come here the 13th of next month; to pray the Rosary every day, and to learn to read. Later, I will tell you what I want.”*

Maria Carreira could not understand what Our Lady was saying, but could hear “something like a very faint voice.” ^[50] Lucia’s sisters Maria and Teresa were also among the one hundred or so observers. Maria heard, along with some around her, what sounded like “a bee buzzing around inside an iron jar.” She turned to Teresa with an inquisitive look, but Teresa heard nothing. She could see the children staring intently above the tree, but didn’t observe its branches bent in any particular way. She did, however, notice that Lucia was “talking and listening as one does in conversation.”^[51]

In response to a request she had received from one of the villagers, Lucia asked the Lady if she would cure a sick person. *“If he is converted, he will be cured during the year, the Lady promised.”* “I would like to ask you to take us to Heaven,” Lucia said. *‘Yes, I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon. But you are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world a devotion to my Immaculate Heart. I promise salvation to those who embrace it, and those souls will be loved by God like flowers placed by me to adorn His throne.’* Lucia asked sadly: “Am I to stay here alone?” *“No my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Don’t lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.”*

Upon speaking these final words, the Lady opened her hand and for the second time emanated her light on the children. Lucia noted that the light was a form of communication in which the children saw themselves immersed in God. “Jacinta and Francisco seemed to be in that part of the light that rose towards Heaven,” while Lucia remained in the “light which was poured out on the earth. In front of the palm of Our Lady’s right hand was a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it. The children instinctively understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, and for which they must seek reparation. Within the vision of

the Most Blessed Trinity the children could see Jesus and Mary.^[52]

As the vision of the Trinity faded and Our Lady spoke these final words, She ascended from the holm oak tree and quickly floated away toward the east until She was no longer visible. Maria Carreira heard Lucia say, “Pronto! Now she can’t be seen any more. Now she is entering heaven, Now the doors are being shut.”^[53]

The children remained as they were but the people assembled to witness the event were very excited. Though they could see nothing, it was apparent to them that something amazing had just happened. Some argued about what took place while others asked questions of the children. Still others began to pluck leaves from the top of the tree forcing Lucia to ask them to take only the leaves from the bottom, those not touched by Our Lady.

4:00 PM

Many within the assemblage finally dispersed in different directions reciting the Rosary as they departed. The children too were now able to make their way back to Aljustrel with just a few of the crowd still following them asking questions and taunting them. Discouraged at the lack of reply, the last of the strangers departed leaving the children in peace. Now it was Francisco’s turn to ask questions. For as with the previous apparitions, he could see, but not hear the words of Our Lady. Lucia explained that Jacinta and Francisco would go to heaven soon which caused Francisco a great deal of excitement.

When they reached their house Jacinta and Francisco ran in very excitedly. Manual and Olimpia had just returned home from the fair where they purchased two oxen. The other children had attended the St. Anthony festivities at Fatima. “We saw the Lady again Mother!” Jacinta exclaimed. “And she told me that I am going to heaven soon.” Olimpia and her siblings questioned her in disbelief, almost mockingly, but their father neither laughed at his two youngest children nor tried to pry from them the secrets Our Lady shared with them.

Lucia’s reception upon her arrival home was a bit more chilling. Her family were already convinced that she was an unconscionable liar and Maria Rosa was becoming increasingly more indignant. She ridiculed the crowd of onlookers calling them fools and blamed Lucia for the hysteria.

JUNE 14 – JULY 11, 1917

The days passed but not without the suffering that Our Lady had promised would be experienced by the children. The villagers all seemed to have turned against them. They laughed at them and ridiculed them at virtually every opportunity. The children became the brunt of the villagers' jokes and to some, the object of their hatred. Yet, that did not bother Lucia nearly as much as the betrayal she felt from her sisters and mother. Reaching the boiling point Maria Rosa told Lucia that in the morning they were again going to go see Fr. Ferreira at St. Anthony's and at that time Lucia would tell him the truth!

The two set out for St. Anthony's Church early the next morning with a sullen Lucia walking several feet behind her determined mother. When they reached the Marto house, Maria Rosa stopped in to speak with Olimpia providing a few moments for Lucia to meet with Jacinta. In her calming way Jacinta told Lucia not to cry but instead to offer it as a sacrifice adding that she and Francisco would go to the well to pray for her and told Lucia to join them as soon as she returned.

Lucia and her mother continued up the hill toward the church without speaking a word. Maria Rosa never glanced back at Lucia and her every step, as well as her black dress, dark shawl and black kerchief betrayed the anger that she harbored. Prior to going to see the pastor, however, Maria Rosa entered the church and attended the Holy Mass providing some much-needed relief for the forlorn Lucia. Kneeling before the uplifted Host and Chalice, the seer offered all her sufferings to her Lord and Savior. The Mass ended far too soon for Lucia's liking and the two were off to the rectory. About midway up the stairs leading to the front door, Maria Rosa turned to Lucia, acknowledging her for the first time since they left home, saying, "Don't annoy me anymore! Tell the Prior now that you lied, so that on Sunday he can say in the church that it was a lie, and end the whole thing before all the people go running to Cova da Iria to pray in front of a holm oak bush!"^[54] Fr. Ferreira invited them in and the two had a seat until the Pastor called for Lucia to join him in his study. There he asked her many questions, every detail, even the most boring. He had already spoken to Francisco and Jacinta so he had fairly good information with which to make a comparison of Lucia's detail. After thoughtful analysis, Fr. Ferreira determined that the children had told the truth about what they had seen and heard. But, he added,

“It doesn’t seem to me like a revelation from heaven. It may be a deception of the devil, you know! We shall see. We shall see. We shall give our opinion later on,” he said to Maria Rosa as they departed the rectory.

This startling revelation took Lucia and her mother aback. The poor little girl was exhausted and terrified. On the return walk home, Maria Rosa took every opportunity to remind Lucia of the words of the priest and sometimes added blows and kicks for emphasis. As soon as they arrived home, Lucia retreated to the solace of the well where she had seen the Angel. There she found Francisco and Jacinta still on their knees praying for their cousin. Jacinta ran to Lucia asking how the meeting went. They listened with indignation as Lucia told them everything. “It’s not the devil,” Jacinta objected. “No! They say the devil is very foul and ugly, and he is under the ground in hell. And that Lady is so beautiful, and we saw her go up to heaven!”^[55]

Despite Jacinta’s reassurance, Lucia was unable to sleep at all that night, replaying the words of the priest in her mind repeatedly, and wondering if it was possible that she had unwittingly become the instrument of Satan. This mental anguish repeated itself each night for a very long time and Lucia’s suffering was great.

JULY 12, 1917

The constant berating of her family, the anguish caused by her nightmares and the horrific thoughts generated by her own imagination were too much for Lucia. She finally determined that the priest must be right and that her visions had to be the work of the devil. She informed Francisco and Jacinta that she would not accompany them to the Cova da Iria the following day as previously instructed by the Lady. Her two young cousins made several attempts to convince her to go to the Cova with them, but Lucia was steadfast in her commitment to never again go to the Cova da Iria on the 13th of the month.

Yet, there was something deep within her that caused her concern. After all, even the hardships of her newfound daily life delivered some consolations. Her mind drifted to the day when two priests visited her, encouraged her, and asked her to pray for the Holy Father. “Who is the Holy Father?” Lucia inquired. The priest took great pains to explain who the Holy Father was and his role in the faith. From that day forward, Lucia and her

cousins never missed an opportunity to pray for him adding three Aves to their daily Rosary for the Vicar of Christ.

And there was the terrific example of Francisco, who not only embraced his sufferings, but seemed to enjoy them. He would frequently say, “That doesn’t matter to me, I will suffer everything as much as she wants!” He would even provide comfort to Lucia at her lowest moments reminding her, “Didn’t Our Lady say we should have much to suffer?”^[56] Finally, overcome with mental exhaustion from the endless mind games, Lucia drifted off to sleep.

SATURDAY JULY 13, 1917

When Lucia awoke she was still determined to refrain from taking the sheep to the Cova that day. This apparently pleased Maria Rosa, though her relief would be short-lived. As the hour drew near to take the sheep from the coral, Lucia was overcome with a desire to see her cousins. She rushed to their house only to find them kneeling beside a bed crying. “Aren’t you going,” Lucia asked them. “We don’t dare go without you!” they sobbed as their tears fell gently to the floor. “Well, I’ve changed my mind, and I’m going,” Lucia informed them. Overjoyed, Francisco told Lucia that they have been praying all night that she might relent in her stubbornness.

Despite the oppressive heat of July, the children ran almost the entire two plus miles of dusty road on their way to the Cova. It hadn’t rained in weeks and the scorching sun drenched the earth making it almost impossible for the laborers to pick the plums or harvest their potatoes. None of the efforts of those struggling roadside laborers was even noticed by the children, however, as they approached the Cova.

Some two to three thousand people had already gathered there including Maria Carriera and her entire family; even her disbelieving husband and their crippled son. Also present for today’s anticipated apparition was Jose Alves of Moita who had informed Fr. Ferreira that his theory of these apparitions being the deceit of the devil was an impossibility. “Who ever heard of the devil inciting people to pray?” the good man had inquired of his priest.

Even Manuel Marto had decided to take the day off to see for himself what his children obsessed about, but found navigation through the dense crowd of onlookers most difficult. He finally reached Jacinta and laughed to

himself thinking of the outfits that some of the people he had just passed were wearing; men in their Sunday suits and women barefoot dressed all in black. He also was a bit concerned at the size of the crowd thinking for the first time that the safety of his children might be at risk. Manuel even noticed his wife and sister-in-law Maria Rosa in the crowd clutching a supply of matches and some holy candles as if ready to perform some type of exorcism.

Manuel took his place next to his children who had not even noticed his arrival. They were kneeling, totally consumed with leading the crowd in the Rosary. As they prayed the three seers first witnessed the flash of light approach. Lucia glanced over and noticed for the first time her uncle and other men wearing hats. "Take off your hats! Take off your hats, for I see Our Lady already!" A moment later, the children saw the Lady upon the holm oak tree. Manuel looked up and noticed a small cloud come to rest over the tree, but before he could acknowledge it or figure out what it might be, the sunlight seemed to dim. A cool breeze blew and he heard a buzz, what he thought sounded "like a horse-fly in an empty water pot." Maria Carreira heard it too, but only Lucia and Jacinta could understand the words Our Lady was speaking to them.^[57]

Lucia again, as she had in the previous apparitions, was the first to speak. "What do you want from me?" she said. The Lady answered, "*I want you to come here. That you come the 13th of next month, to continue to pray the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war, because only She can help you.*" Lucia then said, 'I would like to ask you to tell us who you are, and to work a miracle so that everybody will believe that you are appearing to us.' She answered, "*Continue to come here every month. In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe.*" Lucia then made a number of requests of the Lady, petitions that were requested of her by others for healings. There were many but among them was a request for a cure for Maria Carreira's crippled son to which the Lady responded that she would not cure him but would give him a means of livelihood if he would say his Rosary every day. She noted that all such people needed to pray the Rosary in order to obtain the graces needed during the year for their requests to be granted. "*Sacrifice yourselves for sinners,*" the Lady continued, "*and say many times, especially whenever you make some sacrifice: Oh Jesus, it is for love of you, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of*

Mary.”

As she spoke these words, Our Lady stretched out her hands, as before, emulating rays of light that seemed to penetrate directly into the earth, exposing to the children a sea of fire. In Lucia’s words, “Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair.”

The vision horrified the children and made them tremble with fear causing Lucia to cry out. “The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. Terrified and as if to plead for succor,” the children looked up at the Lady, who so kindly, and ever so sadly, said to them,

“You have seen Hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end, but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI. When you see the night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father. To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be

granted to the world. Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him. When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery, 'Oh my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are in most need.'”

The Lady then revealed the third and final secret. In the moments that followed not a sound could be heard, not even from the two to three thousand assembled until Lucia broke the silence by asking, “Is there anything more that you want of me?” Being nothing else, the Lady ascended towards the east disappearing into the “immense distance of the firmament.” [\[58\]](#)

The children remained silently staring eastward for a time and then looked at each other as people began to close in around them. “What did she look like? What did she say? The questions seemed never ending. Manuel grabbed his daughter pulling her up in his arms. She hugged his neck as the people continued to barrage her and the other children with questions. And so it went until someone offered to take them home in an automobile. Mr. Marto agreed and the exhausted children rushed into the waiting car and headed for home. [\[59\]](#)

THE DAYS PRIOR TO AUGUST 10, 1917

As August 13, 1917 approached, word of the Fatima apparitions spread throughout the region far beyond the confines of Fatima. The anti-Catholic secular newspapers began to pick up coverage of the story and conspiracy theories were plentiful. The *Jacobin*, for example, questioned whether the entire affair was a theatrical event staged by the clergy, particularly the Jesuits, as a means of regaining some of the prestige lost in the Revolution of 1910. *O Seculo*, Lisboa’s chief secular daily, printed a “sarcastic and distorted account on July 21, 1917, under the headline:

A MESSAGE FROM HEAVEN-COMMERCIAL SPECULATION?

Even the Catholic diocesan paper *The Ouriense of Ourem*, was careful in their acknowledgement of a miracle. That headline read:

REAL APPARITION OR SUPPOSED ILLUSION

Many sought some scientific explanation for the reported apparitions raising psychosis, epilepsy and collective suggestion as possible explanations of the incredible tale from the Serra da Aire.^[60]

While not being able to read the newspaper accounts, the children were put out by the spectacle of people; self-serving people who came from miles in carriages and automobiles, dressed in fancy clothes, who were there, for the most part, to see what bounty they might claim from heaven's messengers. They were more tolerant of the poor who walked miles, without shoes, some completing the final mile on bleeding knees, to beg the children to intercede with Our Lady for a cure for some infirmed, diseased or crippled family member, but even for them the children's patience was being stretched thin. Manuel Marto remembers the insane questions that some people asked, some of them were terrible. "Did Our Lady also have goats and sheep when she was a little girl? Did Our Lady ever eat potatoes?" The questions were constant coming from all directions. The children could have no rest when someone of these strangers was around.

Children are resilient and the three visionaries of Fatima were not any different in that regard as they became quite skilled at avoiding curiosity seekers. One day, when they saw several well-to-do ladies and gentlemen emerge from an automobile, the children knew there was no escape for they had already been spotted. "Where do the little shepherds live? The ones that saw Our Lady?" they asked. The children gave very exact directions to their homes and the strangers thanked them, climbed back into their automobile, and drove down the hill. The children were excited at their accomplishment and hid among some olive trees behind Lucia's house until they thought it safe to emerge.

The children were especially fearful of priests who traveled to see them. Many were Jesuits and they had a propensity for treating the children with skepticism and hostility. They seem almost trained to ask many clever questions that others would never think to ask, questions meant to trick them or trip them up to prove that they were lying.

The exception was the saintly Fr. Cruz, the same man who told Fr. Pena that Lucia was versed enough in her catechism to receive her First Communion despite her young age, later telling Lucia, "My daughter, our soul is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Keep it always pure..." But that was four years earlier. So much had happened since that time of cherished innocence. Fr. Cruz changed too. He was nearly crippled and found that

walking had become a most difficult exercise. Despite his pain, he continued to preach and save souls.

He questioned the children in a most respectful way and then asked them to lead him to the exact spot of the apparitions. The children walked on either side as the good priest rode a small donkey along the road. It was for him, as well as the children, an arduous journey, but a trip well worth the sacrifice as Fr. Cruz concluded after his questions and site visit, that the children had told the truth of what they had witnessed. He taught them many prayers meant to console them and from that moment became a champion of their visions.

Lucia's family however, remained unconvinced and grew in their hostility toward Lucia. Even Antonio, once more ambivalent to his daughter's fantasies, now joined in his family's aggression after traveling to the Cova and witnessing the destruction that the crowds had caused to his land. His vegetable gardens were destroyed. The soil around them was so hard after being trampled by thousands of feet that any attempt at cultivation was useless. Horses had eaten his cabbage, beans and potato vines. What wasn't eaten was trampled. There would be no crops. The family feared starvation and Antonio began drinking even more than he had before.

Whenever Lucia was hungry, her sisters would tell her to go to the Cova da Iria and eat what she could find growing. Her mother told her to go ask "that Lady" for something to eat. Not even Jacinta could reason with her aunt and cousins as she tried to explain that it was not Lucia's fault that all these people went to Cova da Iria. It was too late; the die had been cast. It was only at the Cova or Valinhos or the hills near the Cova that Lucia could take any solace whatsoever.

The children continued to lament what Our Lady had them witness. The vision of hell was so vivid on their impressionable minds that they just couldn't stop thinking about it. It monopolized all their discussions and even made the solitude and peacefulness of time at the Cova more frightening. Francisco seemed to handle it best preferring to focus on the goodness of God. Jacinta could not. She began having visions of the future; of the horrors of World War II, of starving people lining a road crying with hunger, of the Holy Father kneeling in a church before the Immaculate Heart of Mary leading hundreds, maybe thousands in prayer. There was so much more about the Pope in Jacinta's visions that Lucia warned her not to speak of as it would violate Our Lady's request to keep the secrets She had imparted to the

children.

The children were destined to walk along the path that Christ chose for them and Jacinta, at least, could see where the road was leading. The persecution that awaited Jesus on his chosen path of Calvary was in store for the three visionaries and the antagonism from many people that confronted them, the hatred of what they had become, was seemingly never ending. But the words of loathe were about to take on a new dimension as those words began to morph into the political action of the anti-clerical elite.

Administrator Artur de Oliveira Santos, Fatima's local authority, was headquartered in the district of Vila Nova de Ourem, and was every bit an anti-clerical fanatic as those in charge of the newspapers. Known as "The Tinsmith," owing to his former profession, the Administrator was a Freemason who enjoyed enormous power through his position, and ruled his district in a tyrannical style, "imposing restrictions on churches and religious services on his slightest whim." Now, he was hearing tales of two to three thousand people flocking to a place called Cova da Iria to hear three children converse with an invisible woman standing atop a small tree! He was out of patience and, in response to the mounting pressure from other anti-clerics, and what the various liberal newspaper editors called "an invasion of mysticism," he decided to bring about the end to the popular devotion that resulted from the shepherd's visions in Fatima. Worse, he vowed to accomplish this using whatever means necessary. He began by notifying the fathers of the three seers of Fatima, Manuel Marto and Antonio dos Santos, to appear with their children at Vila Nova de Ourem. [\[61\]](#)



Jacinta, (left) Lucia, (middle) and Francisco (right) pose for a photo in 1917. The three children suffered greatly following the first Apparition on May 13th. They were ridiculed, interrogated by clergy and government officials and threatened with a torturous death if they wouldn't recant their stories of the Marian Apparitions.

FRIDAY AUGUST 10, 1917

The Administrator's notice was delivered on August 10, 1917 and caught the children's fathers by complete surprise. Vila Nova de Ourem was a journey of about nine miles and the only way the summoned could make the trip was to walk or ride a donkey. Manuel Marto was upset with the imposition and refused to have his two young children make such an arduous journey, a position his wife Olimpia supported. Moreover, he was not going to have his young children subjected to questioning before the court. He opted instead to make the journey without his children. Antonio dos Santos, however, wanted more than anything to put an end to the absurdity his daughter had created and insisted that Lucia would be present to answer for herself. Maria Rosa concurred. They, therefore, required her to make the extensive, time-consuming trek.

Lucia overheard the discussions and was bitter at the extreme reaction of her family. She lamented in conversation with Jesus, "Why would my aunt and uncle put themselves in danger to defend their children, but my parents turn me over with the greatest indifference, that they may do with me what they will. And she prayed to Him, "But patience! I expect to have to suffer more for Thy love, O my God, and it is for the conversion of sinners."^[62]

SATURDAY AUGUST 11, 1917

MORNING

Antonio and Lucia set out for Ourem on Saturday in the early morning hours stopping by the Marto house along the way. The two fathers spoke for a bit giving Lucia a chance to seek out her cousin. Lucia cried to Jacinta recounting the conversation she had overheard at home. "Never mind," Jacinta said not even trying to disguise her fear. "If they kill you, you just tell them that I am like you, and Francisco even more so, and that we want to die too. And now I will go with Francisco to the well to pray very hard for you." They hugged and Lucia and her father resumed their long journey.^[63]

NOON

Antonio and his daughter arrived in Ourem tired and hot after the

long journey and made their way to the Administration building. Antonio was furious to find the building closed and the doors locked with not a soul in site. The searing heat added to his frustration as he and Lucia made their way along the cobblestone road looking for anyone that might be able to direct them to the Tinsmith. Instead they stumbled upon Manuel who had just arrived on his horse. Antonio conveyed his frustration and Manuel suggested that, because of the hour, they get a bite to eat before trying to find the Administrator. After lunch, the three made their way back to the Administration building only to learn that the building was still closed-up tightly. They stood commiserating for a while until, eventually, a man sauntered by and informed them that the Administration Building had moved to a different street for which he provided directions. The tired travelers made their way as instructed.

Shortly thereafter Antonio, Lucia and Manuel arrived at their destination. The Tinsmith studied his “guests” but seemed more interested in who was absent than those present. “And the boy,” he demanded. “What boy,” Manuel replied, realizing that the Administrator didn’t know that there was a third child missing. Manuel feigned ignorance that his “child’s” presence had been required, but the Administrator voiced his displeasure rather loudly.

In the absence of his other anticipated witness, de Oliveira Santos focused his entire attention on poor Lucia, vigorously interrogating her in the presence of not only her father and her uncle, but several other men unknown to Lucia. The Administrator was determined to force her to reveal the Secret disclosed by the Lady and to extract Lucia’s promise to never again return to the Cova da Iria. To attain his objective the Tinsmith spared neither promise nor threat. Despite his efforts, he could accomplish nothing as Lucia remained silent except to recount, for what seemed to her the hundredth time, the events that were previously disclosed. Seeing that he was getting nowhere with Lucia, he turned to her father. “You there, do they believe these things over in Fatima?” “Oh, no sir!” Antonio replied, “All this is just women’s tales.” Turning to her uncle the Tinsmith said, “And you, what do you say?” If Manuel had any fear he did not show it. Standing tall he answered, “I am here at your command and my children say the same things I do.” “Then you think it’s true,” the Administrator demanded. “Yes, sir,” Manuel answered, “I believe what they say.” At that, the Administrator dismissed them vowing, however, that he would achieve his end, even if this meant that he had to take

Lucia's life. [\[64\]](#)

The three headed back to Aljustrel arriving late in the day and Lucia headed straight for the well where she found her faithful cousins kneeling in prayer. Jacinta ran to Lucia and held her tightly saying, "Your sister told us they had killed you!" They all laughed and enjoyed their reunion as the Angel's lamps began to twinkle in the evening sky.

SUNDAY AUGUST 12, 1917

Crowds had already begun to gather in Fatima many carrying baskets of food, jugs of water, even blankets on which to sleep in the fields for the night. They searched for the children to bring their petitions of the Blessed Mother. Cures, money, love, and jobs. Just about anything imaginable. Some were from faraway places. Others, local villagers, but all sought out the children in relentless fashion.

Maria Rosa was furious, mostly at Lucia, whose "lie" caused this steady onslaught of people that ruined her fields and trampled her crops. If not for her promise to Our Lady to be at the Cova on Monday, Lucia may have accepted her Aunt Cascais offer to keep Lucia and her cousins sheltered at her house until the crowds dwindled. No, Lucia needed to stay home and endure the suffering for the conversion of sinners.

The crowds were rough, treating the children less like people than objects. The people meant no malice, but simply became overexcited when they saw the children. Lucia noted "In the hands of those people we were like a ball in the hands of a little girl. Each one pulled us in his direction and asked his question, without ever giving us time to answer anybody."

By early evening, three policemen arrived at Antonio and Maria Rosa's home, not to quell the noisy crowd that pressed in around their house, but rather to deliver a summons for Lucia to go to the Marto house where the Administrator waited for her. Lucia's father actually received the notification and it was he who took the frightened child to her aunt's house.

At the home of Manuel and Olimpia Marto the Administrator was already threatening the children with death if they persisted in their silence. "Never mind," Jacinta said softly to Francisco, "If they kill us, so much the better, for then we will see Jesus and Our Lady." The lengthy interrogation that followed Lucia's arrival produced no better outcome for Administrator de Oliveira Santos, who, though frustrated, cleverly realized that a different

approach would be necessary if he were to have any success in extracting the “secrets” departed to the children by the Lady.

Over the course of the next few hours, the Tinsmith concocted a new scheme. If the children would not agree to his demands that they reveal their secret and not return to Cova da Iria, then he would use his immense power to extract the information and prevent them from ever returning to the site of the visions. Noting that Father Ferreira would be a more appropriate person to involve himself in matters of this sort, the Administrator asked if the children’s parents would object “to their going to the rectory next morning before keeping their rendezvous at Cova da Iria. Fatima, after all, was on the way to the place of the apparition.” Securing their agreement, the Administrator departed.

MONDAY AUGUST 13, 1917

EARLY MORNING

Early the next morning, de Oliveira Santos arrived at the Marto house where Lucia had already joined her two cousins. He was not expected as Manuel assumed he, not the Administrator, would take his children to the rectory. But as he stood in the doorway, the Administrator informed Manuel that he too wanted to witness the miracle and that they could all go together to the rectory and then the Cova. Manuel was suspicious. This was uncharacteristic behavior for the Administrator. Besides, he looked awfully nervous for someone of his command. “Let’s all go together,” the Tinsmith said, “I will take the little ones with me in the wagon. See and believe like Saint Thomas! Where are the children, by the way? Time is getting on. You’d better have them called.”^[65] As the children entered the room the Administrator informed them of his plan. Despite their hesitance, he convinced them that they should go with him. “We’ll have more time to stop at Fatima, at the house of the Prior. He wants to ask them some questions, you know!” Not even Manuel could overcome that logic with an objection, and the children climbed into the Official’s wagon. Francisco sat in the front and the two girls in back. Manuel and Antonio followed on foot as St. Anthony’s Church and rectory were just a few minutes away at the top of the hill.

On arrival, the Administrator called for Lucia to enter the rectory first while the other two waited in the wagon. Fr. Ferreira’s formerly

accepting demeanor seemed to change, however, when he questioned Lucia on this day. “Who taught you to say the things that you are going about saying?” the priest inquired. “That Lady whom I saw at Cova da Iria,” Lucia responded compliantly. “Anyone who goes around spreading such wicked lies as the lies you tell will be judged, and will go to hell if it isn’t true. More and more, many people, are being deceived by you,” the priest warned. Lucia remained respectful albeit forceful in her reply. “If anyone who lies goes to hell, I will not go to hell,” Lucia retorted as she stared directly into the priest’s eyes, “for I don’t lie and I tell only what I have seen and what the Lady has said to me. And as for the crowd that goes there, they only go because they want to. We don’t’ call anybody.”^[66]

APPROXIMATELY 11:00 AM

Fr. Ferreira then tried to extract from Lucia the secret that was told to the children by the Lady. “I can’t tell it. But if Your Reverence wants to know it, I will ask the Lady, and if she gives me permission, I will tell you.” The Administrator interrupted at this point noting that these are “supernatural” matters that wasted his time. He took Lucia and departed the rectory, ordering Lucia back into the wagon and headed down the road toward Ourem, a direction opposite that of the Cova. To Lucia’s objection he rather cheerfully noted, “It’s all right, we’ll stop and see the Prior at Ourem a moment. Then I’ll take you to Cova da Iria by automobile. You’ll be there in time!”^[67]

To hide the children from the crowds that made their way in large numbers to the Cova, the Administrator covered them with blankets. Lucia’s father and uncle, who had no idea where the Administrator was taking their children, continued on foot to follow the wagon until they lost sight of it. They then turned and joined the crowd walking toward Cova da Iria. When they finally reached their destination some 30 minutes later, they found over 6,000 people assembled, people who arrived on foot, horseback, mule, bicycle, carriage and automobile. All asked for the children as the hour drew close to Noon.

Among the faithful and curious was Maria Carreira who had prepared a special table with flowers as an “altar” to Our Lady. She had also “supervised the erection of a rustic arch, with some crosses tied to it, and two hanging lamps to mark the spot at night. It seems incredible and most

inconsistent with her former and future attitude toward her daughter's visionary claims, but Maria Rosa is said to have contributed something toward these lamps; and her oldest daughter was helping to arrange the arch and the table.”^[68]

12:00 NOON

The children were conspicuously absent from the Cova, but some of the large crowd gathered around the holm oak tree on which Our Lady was expected to appear and knelt to say the Rosary. Eventually, the entire crowd joined in. At that point, a faint “murmuring sound was heard, followed by what seemed to be a rumble of thunder, some thought in the road, others in the little tree, still others on the far horizon.”

Some in the crowd grew frightened as they placed some credence in a rumor that spread regarding the apparitions being the devil's work. It seems that there is a “small, extinct volcanic crater near the Cova da Iria...and,” some believed, “that it [the story of the apparitions] was all a trick of the devil to get these good people in one place, and then have it open up and swallow them in its fiery depths.”^[69] So at the sound of the thunder, some ran away in fear while others seemed paralyzed in their fear. “We're all going to die,” a few of the terrified were heard saying. Those who remained noticed a flash of light and what appeared to be a small white cloud approaching from the east and settling over the holm oak tree. Just a few seconds later, it rose from the tree and drifted eastward into the blue sky. As the onlookers glanced at one another they noticed that their faces and clothing were “tinted with the various colors of the rainbow...while the foliage of the trees and bushes seemed like brilliant flowers instead of leaves, and the dry earth itself was checkered with different gorgeous hues. There is no doubt Our Lady had come,” Maria Carreira commented, “but she didn't find the children.”^[70]

It seems that different people witnessed slightly different events that day although each description was similar, if not exact, in nature. Lucia's sisters Maria and Teresa, who were also present at this time described their experience. They could see that the crowd was growing impatient. Their father, Antonio, yelled to the assembled that there was no need to wait as the children were not present. On short order, there was a loud noise. Some reacted to the sound of what Teresa described as two sticks banging together. Maria didn't hear it, but those who did grew frightened and started to run up

the north slope of the Cova. Maria and Teresa were unsure what they were running from, but followed any-way. As they ran, Maria heard an old man say, “People of little faith, don’t’ you see the miracle?” Maria and Teresa stopped and walked back toward the man, and they too noticed something unusual. “flowers resembling snow falling from the sky, and colored lights like a rainbow on the ground. People put out their hands to catch the flowers only to find that they disappeared.” ^[71] The clouds around the sun also “reflected different colors on the people.” Some saw “the figure of Our Lady in the clouds,” but Maria and Teresa did not.

Many wondered what had happened to them and though neither of the fathers revealed anything of the morning’s events, rumor began to circulate through the crowd that Fr. Ferreira and the Administrator were responsible to the children’s absence. The crowd grew hostile toward them shouting, “Down with the Administrator, Down with the Prior!” Some in the crowd suggested taking a mob to Fatima, if not Ourem, to deal with the scoundrels face to face, until reminded that justice will be administered by God and should not be left to man’s discretion. Manuel Marto, however, was more concerned about the well-being of his children and hastily returned home where he found his wife weeping.

To Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta, it was abundantly clear that the Tinsmith had no intention of taking them to the priest’s house as he drove them directly to his house. Once there, the children were taken to a room and told that they would not be let out until they had revealed the Secret. The children were certainly frightened, but despite the terror they were most concerned that they missed their appointment with Our Lady. Francisco hoped out loud that the Lady would make an appearance there in the room, but there was no flash of light, no approaching cloud, no sign of Our Lady. The three of them wondered if their absence made the Lady sad and discussed whether she might ever appear to them again. Jacinta cried as Francisco did his best to console her. “Let’s offer this to Jesus for poor sinners, as that Lady told us to do,” he said. And turning his eyes toward heaven, he began to pray. Jacinta soon joined with Francisco in prayer and night turned to morning.

AUGUST 14, 1917
10:00 AM

The Administrator came to the room where the children were being held and led them to the Town Hall, there, conducting another long inquisition. But the night of captivity did nothing to loosen the children's tongues. The frustrated Administrator concluded his questioning after a couple of hours and began to think of his options.

12:00 NOON

By lunchtime the children found themselves back at the Administrator's home where they were given lunch by the Tinsmith's kind wife who felt compassion for them. She even let them play with her children for a time, seeing to it that they lacked for nothing. Lucia noticed how her little cousin continued to suffer with the realization that their parents had abandoned them. With tears streaming down her cheeks, Jacinta said, "Neither your parents nor mine have come to see us. They don't bother about us anymore!"

With little regard to his wife's expression of compassion, the Administrator was determined to extract from the children the confession that would put an end to the nonsense once and for all. He questioned the children a bit more, and gaining no information, informed them that since his kindness yielded no results he was going to throw them in jail until they confessed their lies.

The town jail cells were horrible places "dark, acrid with old and disreputable odors, full of harsh discordant echoes, and shut in by iron bars from the world of free men."^[72] Most of the other occupants were not reputable characters, but rather petty criminals and drunkards. This was the cell chosen for the three children of Fatima. Opening the cell door, the Tinsmith threatened to boil the children in oil if they persisted in their refusal to divulge the Secret of Fatima. Still in their presence, he ordered that a cauldron of oil be heated, and threatened to put the children in the cauldron if they did not cooperate. He then left them in the cell to allow them time to ponder the situation.

The children immediately retreated to the back of the cell near the barred window that overlooked the cattle market. Jacinta peered out and began to cry telling Lucia, "...We are going to die without ever seeing our parents again. I want to see my mother!" Lucia tried to take Jacinta's mind

off her mother by suggesting that the three children each take one of the intentions for which the Lady had asked them to pray – sinners, the Holy Father and reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Though agreeing, when asked to choose the one she preferred, Jacinta responded, “I’m making the offering for all the intentions, because I love them all.” “With her face bathed in tears, she joined her hands, raised her eyes to heaven and said, ‘O my Jesus! This is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, for the Holy Father, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary!’”

Soon thereafter, Jacinta’s thoughts would again drift to her mother. This time it was Francisco who reminded her “If we never see our mother again, patience! Let us offer it for the conversion of sinners. The worst will be if Our Lady never comes back any more. That’s what bothers me. But I am going to offer that, too, for the conversion of sinners.”

This gentle reminder was enough to satisfy Jacinta for a while though similar conversations occurred many times throughout the ordeal often resulting in the three children kneeling in prayer in the cell amidst the adult prisoners.

Such a prison spectacle obviously attracted the attention of the other prisoners who gathered around the children with their questions. One of the imprisoned men tried to persuade Jacinta to give in, telling her that she could avoid being killed by simply telling the secret to the Administrator, but Jacinta responded, “I’d rather die!” Jacinta then rose from her kneeling position, removed the medal containing an image of Our Lady from her neck, and asked a tall prisoner to hang it on a nail that was in the wall. She immediately knelt again. The prisoners also got on their knees and joined the children in prayer saying only the prayers that they knew. When the Rosary ended, Jacinta went back to the window and began to cry again. Despite offering the sacrifice to Jesus, she was still saddened thinking about her mother.

One of the prisoners who developed a fondness for little Jacinta decided to play the concertina to divert the child’s attention from her plight. As he played, they all started singing, children and adults together. One of the prisoners asked if the children knew how to dance to which they replied, “Yes. We know the Fandango and the Vira; two folk dances that are very popular in Fatima region of Portugal particularly during celebrations such as those held in commemoration of a Saint. And, there was no shortage of such

celebrations in a country as religious as Portugal. In fact, each region popularized its own style of dance for that purpose, dance styles such as the Vira, Chula, Corridinho, Malhao and Fandango. The Vira, very popular in the Fatima region, is similar to the Australian Waltz, where couples form a circle facing each-other and go around a circle doing different steps, changing partners as they go, although sometimes the women have solo parts. Typically, these dances are performed in costume consisting of a long length red and black skirt with a flower pattern on the hem of the skirt. Women wear a white shirt and a red head-piece. The Fandango is like the Vira, in the steps, but the music is much different. Originally formed in Spain, this dance is much loved and celebrated in Portugal not only on special saint celebrations but also at Christmas. The traditional costume of the Fandango is a long red skirt and a red shirt.

Today, however, there would be no costume, nor would there be any precept of a formal celebration. Rather the entire ruse was simply a distraction by a kindly cellmate from the horror that this moment presented to the children. The poor thief sharing Jacinta's cell tried to dance with her but found her to be so tiny that he was forced to pick her up and dance with her in his arms.

Lucia knew how much Jacinta loved to dance and recalled that she was quite good at it. In her mind's eye, Lucia drifted back to the day that Jacinta learned that one of her brothers was killed in the war, recalling how much she cried. Even then, Lucia could distract her, by arranging a little dance with two of her other brothers. There was the poor child dancing away as she dried the tears that ran down her cheeks. Her fondness for dancing was such, that the sound of some shepherd playing his instrument in the pasture was enough to start her dancing all by herself.^[73]

At least for the time being, as they danced to the sounds of the concertina, the children didn't think so much about the boiling caldron of oil that awaited them. The music and dancing stopped abruptly, however, when a policeman entered the cell and summoned the children to follow him to the office of the Administrator.

The Tinsmith made another attempt to extract the secret from the children who met his demand with an unambiguous silence. "Very well," the frustrated official said, "I have tried to save you. But since you will not obey the government, you shall be boiled alive in a cauldron of hot oil."^[74] He shouted a command and the door to his office opened. On the other side stood

a very big guard with a contemptuous look on his face. “Is the oil good and hot?” the Administrator inquired of him. “Yes, Senhor Administrator,” came the reply. “Boiling,” the Administrator demanded. “Yes Senhor,” the guard insisted. Grabbing Jacinta by the arm, the Administrator instructed, “Take this one and throw her in.”

Francisco and Lucia were certain she had gone to her death and began to pray for her courage. “What do we care if they kill us? Francisco offered. “We’ll go right to heaven.” Soon the door reopened and the ugly guard said, “She’s fried, now for the next one.” He grabbed Francisco and pulled him out of the room slamming the door behind him.

Lucia was now alone with the Administrator. “It will be you next,” he said. “You’d better tell me the secret, Lucia.” With marked indifference Lucia replied, “I would rather die.” “Very well. You shall,” the Administrator obliged. The Administrator was certainly aware of the political problems the torturous death of such innocent children would bring, however, and had no plans to do anything beyond scaring the three innocents into confessing.

Shortly thereafter the guard returned, grabbed Lucia’s arm and led her away to another room where Lucia was delighted to see Francisco and Jacinta alive.

Administrator de Oliveira Santos was defeated. He kept the children overnight perhaps still holding out hope that they might relent, but was forced to release them the following morning.^[75]

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 15, 1917

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

Olimpia and Manuel Marto attended morning Mass at the Church of St. Anthony. They prayed for guidance and grieved for the loss of their children at the hands of the Administrator. Nearly everyone at church that morning spoke of the kidnapping and rumors that the children had been transferred and were now incarcerated at Santarem, a larger, more penal-type facility. One reported that they were seen playing on the porch of the Administrator’s house in Ourem. Another said they were on the porch at the rectory in Fatima, a rumor which in fact proved to be true. Marto grabbed his daughter in his arms and sobbed as he held on to her tightly. The crowd that lingered after Mass was visibly overjoyed but at the same time clenched fists

and shared some very angry words toward the Administrator. Marto spoke to the crowd urging them to behave as the problem was not with any individual but rather with the unbelief that persisted from those in control.

Just then, the Administrator, who had taken the children back to the rectory, approached. He asked Marto to join him in a glass of wine, an offer that Marto very quickly rejected. The crowd, however, grew angrier and, if not for the intervention of Manuel Marto, the Tinsmith may well have been injured at the hand of the angry mob. As the enraged horde moved toward the Tinsmith, Marto quickly changed his mind and agreed to accept the Administrator's offer to have a glass of wine at the nearby shop.

While all this was developing, the children quietly slipped away and headed for the Cova where they recited the Rosary at the foot of the small holm oak upon which Our Lady had appeared to them. The tree now stood almost devoid of its foliage and even missed a few branches that pilgrims had carried away as souvenirs. The children also took notice of the arch and table left by Maria Carreira on August 13th. On it lay some flowers and two candlesticks that pilgrims had left as homage. Maria Carreira had already gathered several coins that had been left there as well. In all there were 1340 reis – just under 2 US dollars.

The morning return home after two days in captivity was certainly cause for happiness and Jacinta and Francisco's parents wanted their children to remain at home with them so they could properly celebrate their return. To relieve Francisco and Jacinta of their chore Manuel and Olympia Marto sent their son John out to pasture the sheep instead.^[76]

Lucia, on the other hand, received no such warm welcome and upon her return home was immediately instructed to get the sheep and take them to the pasture, a request to which she obediently complied.^[77]

AUGUST 16, 1917 – AUGUST 18, 1917

Over the course of the ensuing three days the children pastured their sheep as normal, each day hoping for an appearance by the Lady. At the end of each day they returned home in disappointment for lack of an appearance.

SUNDAY AUGUST 19, 1917 MORNING

Sunday August 19th was clear, sunny and typically hot when Maria Carreira awoke. Up until now, she was unable to convince anyone to take charge of the money that she had collected at the Cova da Iria. On this day, however, she awoke earlier than most days to allow time to search out Lucia in the hope of convincing her, if not to take the money, to at least ask Our Lady what should be done with it. Finding Lucia, Maria made her plea, but Lucia steadfastly refused to accept responsibility for the cash. “At least,” Maria begged, “ask Our Lady what should be done with the money that was collected.”^[78] To this request Lucia consented.

Lucia then went to meet Francisco and his brother John and together, they led the sheep to pasture on the Serra. For reasons that are unclear, Jacinta did not pasture the sheep this day. During the course of the day the three “children strolled, played, talked and said their prayers” all while keeping a watchful eye on their flock

By late afternoon the children, with their sheep, had wandered to a hollow in the rocks called Valinhos. They lingered about midway between Aljustrel and the cave on the northern slope of Cabeco.

APPROXIMATELY 4:00 IN THE AFTERNOON

While at Cabeco, Lucia sensed a subtle change in the atmosphere, it was a feeling similar to the way things always felt before a supernatural visitation. Francisco felt it too and they knew that the Lady was about to appear. It suddenly dawned on Lucia that Jacinta was not with them and she pleaded with John to quickly run to get her, that she might not miss the vision. Francisco too begged his brother who steadfastly refused to leave, that is until Lucia offered to pay him two vintens, small coins valued at about a penny each, for his trouble. Then he quickly ran off to fetch his sister. Several minutes passed and Francisco and Lucia saw the usual flash of light just about the same time that they noticed Jacinta running toward them.

A moment later, the Lady appeared atop a holm-oak tree, not unlike the one at the Cova, and the children fell to their knees. Our Lady looked at them tenderly as if to console them for their suffering. “What is it that you want of me?” Lucia asked as she had in all the previous apparitions. *“I want you to continue going to the Cova da Iria on the 13th, and to continue praying the Rosary every day. In the last month, I will perform a miracle so that all*

may believe.” Remembering her promise to Maria, Lucia asked, “What do you want done with the money that the people leave in the Cova da Iria?” *“Have two pedestals made,”* the Lady replied. *“One is to be carried by you and Jacinta and two other girls dressed in white; the other one is to be carried by Francisco and three other boys. The money from the pedestals is for the ‘festa’ of Our Lady of the Rosary, and what is left over will help towards the construction of a chapel that is to be built here.”* As she had in the past, Lucia asked the Lady if she would cure some of the sick that had made the request of her. “Yes,” the Lady responded, *“I will cure some of them during the year.”* Then, looking very sad, Our Lady said, *“Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.”* As she finished this admonishment she ascended towards the east as she had in the previous apparitions.^[79] For a long time the children remained kneeling in their typical post-visit state of ecstasy. When they were finally able to move, Jacinta “cut off some branches of the shrub on which the Lady had stood, and took them home.”^[80] She gave some of them to her father who examined them remarking at the beautiful fragrance they emitted. Then the children went to Lucia’s house and Jacinta presented some of the branches to Maria Rosa saying, “O Aunt, our Lady has appeared again’ These are the places where She put Her feet.” Maria Rosa responded, “I thought the administrator had finished with all that, and here you are still telling lies. I know what you need.”^[81] Yet later, after smelling the branch, Maria Rosa noticed that there was something “singularly sweet” in the fragrance that had gone unnoticed when Jacinta first presented it.

This marked the fourth time that Our Lady appeared to the three children. This time, however, Lucia believed strongly that the suggestion of sacrifice spoken of by the Lady was to include the practice of mortification.

^[82]

THE DAYS FOLLOWING AUGUST 19, 1917

Some days later, as the children led their sheep to pasture, Lucia found a thick piece of rope on a narrow street of Aljustrel. She picked it up and tied it around her arm for fun, but noticed that before long, it began to hurt. It was then that she suggested to her cousins that they tie it around their waists, against their bare skin, as a sacrifice to God. They both agreed and,

laying the rope against a rock, they used a sharp-edged stone like a knife, to divide the rope into three pieces. The rope was very rough and wearing it on their waists caused a great deal of pain, so much so, that Jacinta would sometimes cry because of it. Whenever this happened, Lucia would suggest that she remove the rope, but Jacinta would reply, “No! I want to offer this sacrifice to Our Lord in reparation, and for the conversion of sinners.”^[83] This was the children’s first experiment with mortification, but it would not be their last.

On another day, while at play, the children picked plants off the walls and pressed them in their hands to “hear them crack.” While plucking the plants, Jacinta grabbed a bunch of nettles receiving a painful sting. Stinging nettles, a plant indigenous to the Fatima region of Portugal, have developed stinging cells as an adaptation to deter herbivores from eating them. The plants contain long, thin, hollow hairs that cover much of the stem and the underside of the leaves. Nettle stings contain formic acid, histamine and other chemicals that inflict a painful sting when touched. As soon as she felt the pain she squeezed them even more tightly in her hands saying, “Look! Look! Here is something else with which we can mortify ourselves!” The children took her suggestion and from time to time would hit their legs with nettles as an offering of sacrifice to God.

Jacinta was very serious about making sacrifices as instructed by Our Lady and never allowed a single opportunity to pass her by. There were two poor families in Moita whose children would beg for food door to door. The three seers met them one day as they walked with the sheep. Jacinta immediately suggested, “Let’s give our lunch to those poor children, for the conversion of sinners.” “And she ran to take it to them”^[84]

From that moment, the three agreed that anytime they met any poor children they would relinquish their lunches to them. Before long, the children would take great care to be sure they met the three visionaries by waiting for them along the road. As soon as the poor children were spotted, Jacinta would run to give them the lunches. Doing this, and the thought of sacrifice, made her very happy. On these days, the three seers “ate only pine nuts and little berries about the size of an olive, which grow on the roots of yellow bell-flowers, as well as blackberries, mushrooms, and some other things” that could be found on the roots of pine trees.^[85]

But on this day, later that afternoon, Jacinta told Lucia she was hungry. There were both holm-oak and oak trees nearby that bore acorns, but

they were still green. Despite their early stage of growth, Lucia said they were edible. Francisco climbed the holm-oaks, picking the acorns until his pockets were full. But before eating, Jacinta remembered that the acorns from the oak trees were more bitter than those of the holm-oak and decided to eat only those, offering it as a sacrifice. This became one of her usual sacrifices, often picking the acorns off the oaks or the unripened olives from the olive trees. One day, Lucia warned Jacinta that they were too bitter, but Jacinta said, “But it’s because it’s bitter that I’m eating it, for the conversion of sinners.”^[86]

One very hot August day a neighbor offered Lucia’s mother a good pasture for their sheep. Though a long distance, it is an area that has shade trees and a pond nearby where the flocks would be able to drink. Maria Rosa instructed Lucia to take siesta beneath a tree where the shade would offer protection from the sun. On the way, Lucia and her cousins met the poor children and Jacinta ran to give them their food before continuing their journey. Though a lovely day the sun was blazing. It seemed that, in that arid and stony wasteland over which they walked, the sun might just burn everything up.

Naturally, the three cousins became very thirsty. Jacinta had an insatiable thirst, but there was nothing to drink along the way. They offered their thirst as a sacrifice initially, but by mid-afternoon, they were compelled to walk to a nearby house and asked a little old lady who lived there for some water. The woman gave Lucia a pitcher of water and some bread which Lucia accepted and promptly offered to share with Jacinta and Francisco. Both refused to partake, however, as a sacrifice for the conversion of sinners. Feeling guilty for her lack of restraint, Lucia poured the contents of the pitcher into a hollow in a rock so the sheep could drink it instead. Lucia then returned the pitcher to the old woman.

As the day got even hotter, they could hear the crickets and frogs from the pond making quite a racket. Jacinta asked Lucia to “tell the crickets and the frogs to keep quiet! I have such a terrible headache.” Lucia knew that Jacinta’s ailment was from her hunger and thirst. It was then that Francisco reminded Jacinta that she could offer the headache and the noise as a sacrifice for the conversion of sinners. Jacinta clasped her “head between her two little hands, saying, ‘Yes, I do. Let them sing!’”

It was clear that the children’s sacrifices were pleasing to God but even Lucia noticed something special about the penances made by Jacinta.

She had become a different person; no longer the whiney, belligerent type that always insisted on getting her way, but a more “patient, more long-suffering, more affectionate” person who seemed to have been “infused with the gift of wisdom.”^[87] Lucia even noticed objective signs of some miracles that she attributed to Jacinta’s intervention. There was, for example, the wretched woman with a terrible disease that the children happened upon one day. Moved by her condition, Jacinta said three Aves for the woman and all her symptoms left her. Another woman in Aljustrel constantly ridiculed the three children following their apparitions. She called them liars and imposters which greatly bothered the children, but after Jacinta prayed for the woman’s conversion, she never again spoke an unkind word to them.

It was also in August that Lucia noticed that her mother “began to feel a little more at peace” with the possibility of the apparitions. Maria Rosa would say, “If there were even just one more person who had seen something, why then, I might believe! But among all these people, they’re [the children] the only ones who saw anything!” But even as more and more people began reporting visions of Our Lady or various signs in the sun, etc., Maria Rosa declared, “I used to think before, that if there were just one other person who saw anything, then I’d believe; but now, so many people say they have seen something, and I still don’t believe!” Around that same time, Lucia’s father also began to defend her and to silence Lucia’s critics saying, “We don’t know if it’s true, but neither do we know if it’s a lie.”^[88]

Just as Lucia’s parents were finally showing a bit more sympathy for their daughter, the Martos were losing their patience. Olimpia complained of having to continually send someone to fetch her children, simply to please the people who came asking to speak with them. She therefore handed over the care of the flock to her other son John enabling Jacinta and Francisco to remain near the house. This decision caused Jacinta great pain for two reasons: first, because she was now forced to speak to everyone who came looking for her and, second, because she was no longer able to spend the whole day with Lucia. But Olimpia offered Jacinta no alternative.

To escape from the unwelcome visitors, she and Francisco would hide in Loca do Cabeco, the cave hallowed out in the rock on the slope of the hill of Cabeco on top of which stood a windmill. Situated as it is on the eastern slope facing their hamlet, this hiding place is so well formed that it afforded them an ideal protection from both the rain and the burning sun, especially since it is sheltered by many oak and olive trees. How many were

the prayers and sacrifices that Jacinta offered there to Jesus! Flowers of innumerable varieties grew all over the slope. Among them were many irises for which Jacinta had a special love. Every evening Jacinta would wait for Lucia to walk past on her way home, holding an iris she had picked for her, or some other flower if there were no irises to be found. Jacinta took great joy in plucking off the petals one by one strewing them over Lucia.

Like Olimpia, Maria Rosa too was weary of the throngs of people requesting an audience with Lucia, but was satisfied for the time being with deciding each day where Lucia was to pasture the sheep, so that she knew where to find her when she was needed. When the place was nearby, Lucia would tell her little cousins who lost no time in coming out to join her. Jacinta would run until she caught sight of Lucia. Then, exhausted, would sit down and keep calling to her until Lucia answered and ran to meet her. Eventually though, Maria Rosa could no longer accept wasting her other daughter's time going to replace Lucia in the pasture every time a stranger would ask to speak to her and she decided to sell the lot.

She talked things over with Olimpia and the two agreed to send the children off to school. At playtime during school hours, Jacinta loved to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. But even there, crowds of people would find them. "They seem to guess," Jacinta would tell Lucia, "We are no sooner inside the church than a crowd of people come asking us questions! I wanted so much to be alone for a long time with the Hidden Jesus and talk to Him, but they never let us." It was true, the simple country folk never left them alone. With the utmost simplicity, they told the children all about their needs, their troubles, their ailments. Jacinta showed the greatest compassion, especially when it concerned some sinner, saying 'We must pray and offer sacrifices to Our Lord, so that he will be converted and not go to hell, poor man!'^[89]

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 12, 1917

On the day prior to the next highly anticipated appearance of Our Lady, pilgrims from all corners of the hill country jammed the streets. By nightfall, the strangers, faithful, naysayers, and curiosity seekers alike, also crowded the yard surrounding the two homes of the three visionaries. Many slept in the fields so that by

sunrise on the following day, they could make their way to Cova da Iria to view the promised appearance of the Lady.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 1917

Morning found many in the crowd saying the Rosary. The multitude by now was an estimated 30,000 strong and they crammed the roads and fields from Aljustrel to Fatima. As the hour approached, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco set out to the Cova but had great difficulty navigating the mass of people. Everyone wanted to see the children and speak with them in advance of the Lady's appearance. Showing no respect for the others, simple folk struggled to break through the crowd that pressed around the children. As soon as someone reached one of the children, he would throw himself to his knees and beg to have his petition presented to the Lady. Those who couldn't get close enough shouted from a distance. "For the love of God, ask Our Lady to cure my son who is a cripple," one would cry. "And to cure mine who is blind," another would say. "To cure mine who is deaf!...To bring back my husband, son, who has gone to war! ...To convert sinners! ...To give me back my health as I have tuberculosis!..." On and on it went so as to make it seem that all the afflictions of poor humanity were assembled there. Some even climbed to the tops of the trees and still others, walls, just for the opportunity to see the children pass.^[90] The scene reminded Lucia of Jesus's passage through Palestine, as it was utter chaos and the children were victims of the mayhem. The children responded yes to some of the petitioners and offered a hand to others helping them rise from the dusty ground. And they managed to inch forward, mostly because of some kindly gentlemen that walked ahead of them opening a passage through which the children could pass the multitude. Lucia thought about the faithful people of Portugal. If they would do all this to humble themselves before "three poor children just because they were mercifully granted the grace to speak to [who many believed was] the Mother of God, what would they not do if they saw Our Lord Himself in person before them?" She was grateful for the extraordinary faith of these people. On this day, some thirty young seminarians and five or six priests joined the crowd of onlookers. Among the priests were the Reverend Monsignor Joao Quaresm, the Reverend Father Manuel Pereira da Silva, then a curate at Leiria, the Prior of Santa Catalina and Monsignor

Manuel do Carmo Gois. The four left Leiria in a horse-drawn carriage early that morning to be on hand to witness the apparition. It seems that Reverend da Silva was more curious than faithful but endured the long, arduous journey regardless. They secured a place on some high ground overlooking the “vast natural amphitheater, already dark and seething with human forms.”^[91]

APPROXIMATELY 12:00 NOON

The children, with thousands of people in tow, finally reached the Cova da Iria only to find thousands more already assembled there. The silence was almost eerie as the children knelt before the holm-oak tree and began to say the Rosary. Many of the thirty thousand joined them in chorus. Suddenly people began to shout out with rejoice, praising Our Lady. Some pointed high above prompting others to look in that direction. Monsignor Joao also noticed someone pointing and looked up to observe “a luminous globe that moved from the east toward the west, slowly and majestically gliding down across the distance.”^[92] His friend saw the globe too as it moved westward, but just as suddenly as it appeared, it vanished, right before their eyes. Looking toward his friend Monsignor Joao said, “What do you think of that globe?” He answered with some enthusiasm and without hesitation, “That it was Our Lady.”^[93]

On this they agreed! Unlike them, and many of the thousands of onlookers who could see only the light that carried her to the holm-oak tree, however, the shepherd children were privileged to look directly upon the face of the Mother of God, though the lady still had not yet identified herself to the children as such.

The children were once again engaged in conversation with Our Lady though this, the conversation in the fifth apparition of Our Lady to the children, would be the shortest of all. “*Continue to pray the Rosary in order to obtain the end of the war,*” the Lady said. “*In October Our Lord will come, as well as Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Saint Joseph will appear with the Child Jesus to bless the world. God is pleased with your sacrifices. He does not want you to sleep with the rope on, but only to wear it during the daytime.*”^[94] “I was told to ask you many things, the cure of some sick people, of a deaf-mute...,” Lucia said. The Lady replied, “*Yes, I will cure some, but not others. In October, I will perform a miracle so*

that all may believe.” With that, Our Lady rose as usual and disappeared to the east.^[95] The length of the apparition didn’t matter to the children so long as they got to see her face once again, and this visit brought the promise that in October, the children would also look upon the face of Jesus.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 1917

Unbeknownst to most of the 30,000 onlookers attending the September 13th apparition the Reverend Doctor Manuel Nunes Formigao, who served as the canon of the cathedral of Lisboa and a professor at the Seminary of Santarem was present that day. This learned man of integrity was asked by the Administrator of the Patriarchate in Lisboa to attend the apparition and report his findings to the government; findings that the Administrator quite assuredly assumed would debunk the myth of the apparitions. Though Formigao was not one of the chosen who was able to see the luminous globe, he interviewed enough people who did see it that he found it necessary to explore the phenomenon in more detail. On this day, he returned to Aljustrel to question some of those involved. He began by meeting with Maria Rosa dos Santos and Olimpia Marta who immediately sent for the children. Jacinta was first to arrive home and seemed a bit intimidated by the stranger. Though more emboldened when Francisco arrived, Formigao decided to depose Francisco first and sent Jacinta out to play. Francisco answered the questions posed to him with calmness and certainty. The Doctor then recalled Jacinta for questioning. Lucia arrived last and she too was questioned by Formigao. Hers was without a doubt the longest and most intense questioning. He tried to have her admit that she had apparitions of Our Lady prior to May 1917. Perhaps confusing it with rumors he may have heard about the apparitions she had of the Angel of Peace the year prior, but she would not be tripped up. He also tried to convince Lucia to reveal the secrets given the children by Our Lady but Lucia refused to divulge any such information.

Certainly, there were some minor differences in the accounts provided by the three children, such as whether Our Lady had on a pair of earrings, but no discrepancies of any real significance. Fr. Formigao ended his interrogation of the three children and returned to the Seminary of Santarem to evaluate the information he collected. His overall impression of the children was favorable, but perhaps, he thought, he could garner more

information with a second round of precisely worded questions that might expose any deceptions or satanic agencies.

MONDAY OCTOBER 10, 1917

11:00 PM

To that end, Formigao boarded a train for Chao da Macas eleven days later where he hired a horse and buggy to take him to Vila Nova de Ourem. It was 11:00 PM when he reached his destination in Montelo, two miles outside of Fatima. There, under the pen name of “the Visconde de Montelo,” he lodged with a family that was able to tell him all about the Marto and dos Santos families. He learned that the families were not poor but did nothing to capitalize on the apparitions and in fact had tried to discourage people from gathering on their land. While Manuel dos Santos would drink a bit more than he perhaps should, Maria Rosa was an honest, devout woman with an incredible work ethic. Similarly, Antonio Marto was incapable of deceit, and both he and Olimpia had a deep faith and practiced their Catholic religion always. The children were equally well liked and though most people disbelieved them in May and June, most were now “inclined to accept their story, since so many had seen the cloud over the tree on August 13th and had noted the other strange phenomena in August and September.”^[96] Formigao had gotten all the information he needed and it was now time to confront the children once again.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 11, 1917

Tuesday found Formigao back at the home of Antonio dos Santos. While they waited for Lucia to arrive, Formigao asked Maria Rosa if she had ever told Lucia the story of the Apparitions of Our Lady to the two shepherd children at the southern France village of LaSalette wondering aloud if she may have been influenced by this story. Though these Apparitions took place over 70 years prior, there were many similarities; the two most striking being that Our Lady told secrets to the children which were revealed only to Pius IX, and She offered warnings of coming calamities if the good people of France didn’t stop offending God. Maria Rosa, though admitting to telling the story, thought it a non-factor for Lucia, noting that her daughter never

mentioned the story again.

Lucia finally arrived home and Formigao questioned her in the presence of four witnesses about minute details of the Apparitions. Did Our Lady ever finger the Rosary Beads? (No.) What Did the Lady promise to do to get the crowd to believe she had appeared? (She said She would perform a miracle.) And how many times did she mention it? (A few times, once at the first Apparition and when I asked her the question.) Are you afraid the crowd will harm you if there is no miracle? (I haven't any fear.) Did she tell you to pray for the conversion of sinners? (No. She told me to pray to the Lady of the Rosary so that the war would end. She asked for sacrifices rather than prayers for the conversion of sinners.) The questioning continued in this fashion until Formigao was satisfied. Then he turned his attention to Jacinta for re-examination, and then to Francisco. The line of questioning for the latter two was the same as with Lucia. At the end of this tedious process, Dr. Formigao was convinced that all three children had told the truth and felt that the final test of their veracity would be the miracle promised for the October 13th Apparition. That is an appointment he vowed not to miss.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 12, 1917

Around this same time, Fr. Pocas, Prior of Porto de Mos, also examined the children. He was not nearly as professional or courteous as Dr. Formigeo, however, and treated the children with animosity and contempt. "Look here, girl," he said to Lucia, "now you are going to tell me that all this is lies and witchcraft. If you don't say so, I will say it and have it said everywhere... Everybody will believe me... and you shall not escape!" Much to his chagrin, Lucia remained silent. Despite his tactics, at the end, he too admitted that he thought the children had told the truth.

As the big day approached, Maria Rosa was convinced that the day's events would expose Lucia as a fraud and she feared for her daughter's safety. The fear was not experienced by Maria Rosa alone however. Lucia's entire family panicked as October 13, 1917 drew near. Lucia could not escape her promise, they thought. It was far too specific. A miracle for the whole world to see on Saturday October 13, 1917 at 12:00 Noon. Everyone would know immediately when the miracle does not happen and the crowd of so many will be angry. Only God knows what the consequences will be!

Maria Rosa tried one final time to reason with Lucia. Please, "it's

better for us to go and tell everything. People say we are going to die tomorrow in the Cova da Iria. If the Lady does not make the miracle, the crowd will kill us," she pleaded. "I am not afraid, Mother," Lucia answered calmly. "I am sure the Lady will do everything she has promised." Maria Rosa suggested they go to confession so they will be prepared for death. Lucia agreed to go but not for the reason her mother conceived.

Outside it was cool and breezy. A light mist had begun to fall and it was clear that a storm was approaching. It promised to be a long night as the drizzle turned to a hard, wind driven rain!

SATURDAY OCTOBER 13, 1917 MORNING

Since the last Apparition in September, word continued to spread through the entire region of Fatima and an area well beyond. Many of the thousands that waited with great anticipation for the Lady's final appearance on October 13, 1917 were devout Catholics. They would not be deterred by the torrential rains and gale winds that greeted Fatima's dawn and continued to pummel the area throughout the morning. Despite the gloomy weather, over 70,000 people lined the streets and waited in the trampled fields. Many were barefoot as they plodded through the mud of the Cova da Iria. All were soaked to the skin despite the many who tried to shield themselves from the wind-driven rain with umbrellas. Parents carried their children. Adults carried baskets of food and jugs of water over their shoulders. Others packed them on donkeys that they guided along the streets. Some were skeptical, other curious. Some hoped for a cure, some for forgiveness of their sins, others for material goods and still others for a simple blessing directly from the Mother of God.

Among the skeptics this day was Avelino de Almeida, the managing editor of *O Seculo*, the largest of the newspapers distributed in Lisboa. Almeida was a Freemason who volunteered for the assignment hoping to discredit the children's fable of a ghostly woman floating above a tree departing secrets to shepherds. He started his work the day before as he walked alongside other pilgrims taking mental notes of the experience which he would later reduce to writing for his newspaper.

The story that appeared in the Saturday paper of October 13, 1917 noted how he passed the barefooted men and women who

“carried their footgear in bags on their heads, the men leaning on great staves and carefully grasping umbrellas also. One would say they were all oblivious to what was going on about them, with a great lack of interest in the journey and in other travelers, as if lost in a dream, reciting their Rosary in a sad rhythmic chant. A woman says the first part of the Hail Mary; her companions in chorus say the second part of the prayer. With sure and rhythmical steps, they tread the dusty road which runs between the pine woods and the olive groves, so that they may arrive before night at the place of the apparition, where, under the serene and cold light of the stars, they hope they can sleep, keeping the first places near the blessed azinheira [holm-oak tree] so that today they can see better.”

Almeida did not portray himself as a radical Freemason intent on bringing about the demise of religion, but rather a non-believer who wished no harm, and did not intend to ridicule, those who believed. His story continued,

“Thousands of persons are hastening to a wild expanse of country near Ourem to see and hear the Virgin Mary. Let pious souls be not offended and pure believing hearts be not afraid; we have no intention of being a scandal for those who sincerely hold to their faith and whom the miraculous still attracts, seduces, bewitches, consoles and fortifies, as has been the case for thousands of years, and most certainly will be for other thousands of years! ...This is only a short newspaper article on an event which is not new in the history of Catholicism....Some regard it as a message from heaven and a grace; others see in it a sign and proof that the spirit of superstition and fanaticism has planted deep roots that it is difficult or even impossible to destroy. Times of great calamities have always revived and renewed religious ideas and have favored them. And war, which strikes everywhere, offers them the most favorable and fertile soil for growth. We see that confirmed in the life of

the trenches and even in the spiritual atmosphere of the belligerent countries.”

After summarizing the events of Fatima from May to September, recounting the previous Apparitions of Mary at Lourdes, La Salette and other places, and pointing out the speculators who hoped to profit from such events, Almeida continued,

“The miracle takes place between Noon and one o’clock, according to those who have been there. But not all have the chance to see the holy figure. The number of the elect seems very small. Despite their efforts, many see nothing. This is why those who find themselves near the children are contented with hearing them speak with an invisible partner. Others, on the contrary, see in a divinely solemn moment the stars shining in the firmament, even though the sun be at the zenith. They hear a subterranean groaning which announces the presence of the Lady. They claim that the temperature falls and they compare the impressions of that moment with those they have experienced during an eclipse of the sun.... According to what the children say, the figure of the Virgin appears on an azinheira, surrounded on all sides by a nuage [cloud].... The suggestion of the masses, brought there by the supernatural and captivated by a superhuman force, is so powerful that eyes fill with tears, faces become as pale as corpses, men and women throw themselves on their knees, chant songs and recite the Rosary together.

We do not know if there have already been blind persons who have recovered their sight, paralytics who have regained the use of their limbs, hardened sinners who are turned back from the straight ways of sin to plunge into the purifying water of penance.

But that matters little. The news of the apparitions has spread from Algarve to the Minho. Since the Day of the Ascension the pilgrims have flocked there by thousands on the thirteenth of each month, from near and far. The means of transportation do not suffice.

The clergy of the place and the neighborhood maintain, as

regards the events, a prudent reserve, at least in appearance. It is the custom of the Church. It proclaims loudly that in such circumstances doubt means nothing, for doubts also come from the devil. But secretly it rejoices over the great concourse of pilgrims who since May have become more and more numerous.

And there are even people who dream of a great and magnificent church, always full, of large hotels nearby with every modern comfort, of shops well stocked with a thousand and one different objects of piety and souvenirs of Our Lady of Fatima, and of a railway which will take us to the future miraculous sanctuary with more convenience than the buses in which, for the moment, the mass of the faithful and of the curious now achieve this right....”^[97]

The Marto and dos Santos families, meanwhile were waking to the dreadful weather that awaited them. People, strangers began arriving early and continued to come throughout the morning. Many simply walked in, as if invited, tracking mud and dripping water on the floors inside. They asked to see the children. Just a word with them was all they needed. At the Marto house, some even went so far as to make themselves at home sitting on the chairs and the beds. “Get out of here, all of you!” Olimpia screamed to inattentive ears.^[98]

Lucia and Jacinta declined offers of new ornate dresses from the Baroness from Pombalinho preferring instead to dress in their communion dresses. All the children managed some breakfast and then prepared to leave. Maria Rosa had no intention of going, but at the last minute grabbed her shawl, turned to Lucia and said through her tears, “I know they are going to kill you. Very well, then, if you must go, I will go and die with you.”^[99] While these may not have been words of comfort, they were likely the most supporting words that Maria Rosa had spoken to Lucia since May.



On October 13, 1917, a crowd estimated to be as large as 70,000 converged on the Cova da Iria, land owned by Lucia's parents, to witness the anticipated miracle that, according to the children, was promised by Our Lady. No one in the crowd was disappointed.

The roads along Fatima enroute to Cova da Iria were jammed with people, thousands of them, who kneeled in the mud as the children passed pleading with the children to carry their petitions to Our Lady. The crowds made the travel very slow and the pouring rain and mud-soaked streets made it appear even longer. As they approached the Cova, so many people, 70,000 in all, blocked the way. If not for one man who hoisted Jacinta up on his shoulders yelling "make way for the children who saw Our Lady," they may not have made it to the holm-oak tree. Manuel Marto followed close behind the man with Lucia, Francisco and Maria Rosa on either side of him. Upon reaching their destination, Manuel found Olimpia was already there waiting for them. Lucia's sister Maria stood at a distance, as her husband did not want her to go down the slope with the baby because the entire slope and Cova were covered with people.

Many continued to pray the Rosary as others scanned the sky through the rain looking for a sign of the Lady's arrival. A priest who arrived the night before was kneeling in the mud. He had been praying throughout the night and was now reading from his breviary. He turned to Lucia asking the time of Our Lady's arrival. "At midday," she responded. Then, as if moved by an interior impulse she yelled, "Put down your umbrellas" Though the rain still came down in torrents, some complied. "Put down your umbrellas." she repeated, as more began to heed her instruction.

APPROXIMATELY NOON



This photo was taken during the Miracle of the Sun on October 13, 1917 as the sun danced in the sky. Some looked up in amazement, others looked away in fear. Still others fell to their knees in prayer, but all 70,000 were witness to the miracle that Our Lady performed that day.

The priest, meanwhile, was growing impatient. "It's past midday," he said to Lucia, "Away with all this! It is all an illusion." He pushed the children along as if instructing them to depart, but they refused to be deterred. "Whoever wants to go, can go," Lucia said, "but I'm not going. Our Lady told us to come. We saw her other times and we're going to see her now." As the disappointment began to spread through the crowd, Lucia yelled, "Jacinta, kneel down, for now I see Our Lady there. I can see the flash!" Maria Rosa turned to Lucia and said, "Watch out, daughter! Don't let yourself be deceived!"^[100] Her warning fell on deaf ears, as Lucia, "whose face had become flushed and transparently beautiful" was now staring into the face of Our Lady and had already become entranced in a state of ecstasy. Likewise, Jacinta and Francisco were also oblivious to the mass of people behind them as they stared upward, not at all bothered by the steady rain that pelted them. "What do you want of me?" Lucia asked as she had so many times before. Our Lady answered, *"I want to tell you that a chapel is to be built here in my honor. I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue always to pray the Rosary every day. The war is going to end, and the soldiers will soon return to their homes."* "I have many things to ask you; the cure of some sick persons, the conversion of sinners..." Lucia continued listing some of the petitions brought to her from the crowds. As She had in the past, Our Lady verified that some petitions would be granted while others would not be granted, adding, *"They must amend their lives and ask forgiveness for their sins."* Then, with a very sad expression, She continued, *"Do not offend the Lord our God anymore because He is already so much offended."* When She finished speaking She opened her hands launching a ray of light in the direction of the sun.

APPROXIMATELY 12:30 PM TO 3:00 PM

As She ascended, the reflection of her own light continued to be projected on the sun itself. Lucia sensed this to be the promised sign and cried out to the crowd in a loud voice, "Look at the sun!" Suddenly the rain stopped, the clouds that previously covered the sun dissipated, and the sun appeared in the sky. Though exceptionally bright, the sun was not dazzling. Without warning, it began to turn in the sky as if projecting in each direction bands of light of each color that lit and colored the remaining clouds, the sky, the trees, and the crowd. It stayed for some moments then it went back to its normal position where it remained still for another short while.

As the 70,000 gazed upon the sky and, in particular, the sun, the children remained focused on the Lady of the Rosary, whose vision, though ascended, was now instantly replaced with a vision of St. Joseph holding the Child Jesus. Next to St. Joseph and standing beside the sun was Our Lady, this time wearing a white robe with a blue mantle. St. Joseph appeared to have blessed the world tracing the sign of the cross with his hand three times. As he did this Lucia said, "St. Joseph is going to bless us!" The Child Jesus did the same. All three children saw this vision while the next two were seen by Lucia alone. In the second vision "Our Lady of Sorrows in the somber garb assigned to her by tradition, the Mater Dolorosa of Good Friday, but without the sword in her breast, and beside her stood her divine Son, grieving as when he met her on the way to Calvary. Lucia saw only the upper part of His figure. He looked pityingly on the crowd for whom He had died, and raised His hand to make the sign of the cross over them."

In the third vision, Our Lady appeared as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The Queen of heaven and earth held the baby Jesus upon Her knee.

A few in the crowd claimed to have seen the vision as well yet this claim remains unverified. No one else was privileged with such visions.

The entire mass, however, all 70,000 people, became aware that their clothes, as well as the ground beneath them, were completely dry. In amazement and confusion, they prayed, but just as suddenly as before, the sun looked as if it stood out from the sky appearing to fall on the now terrified crowd below. Most of the assembled fell to their knees and begged mercy. Though still intensely bright, people could look directly at the sun without hurting their eyes. As the crowd gazed at the burning orb, it seemed to "dance," then whirled like a giant wheel of fire. It did this for some time

before stopping; then it quickly rotated again. Then brilliant colors began to reach down to the earth making all that could be seen tinted by the spectrum of colors. No one knew what to make of this and many continued to stare in utter amazement when, in an instant, the “fiery orb seemed to tremble, to shudder, and then to plunge precipitately, in a mighty zigzag, toward the crowd.”^[101] Many observers thought this was the end of the world. Terrified cries were heard from the crowd as some knelt in prayer and others ran for cover. Many critics of the children’s “fantasies” were now believers who fell prostrate to the ground. The Marques do Cruz was heard to say, “Oh my God, how great is Thy power!”^[102]

After about ten minutes the sun began to return to its rightful position in the sky following the same circuitous zigzag route with which it descended. It stood still and became so that no one could look directly at it. The masses were happy to still be alive, looking at each other saying “Miracle! Miracle!” Some laughed, others wept. The reporters wrote.



This view of the crowd, taken on October 13, 1917 during the Miracle of the Sun, shows some of the reaction. Witnesses agree that the sun began to spin and then started falling to the earth before returning to its natural position in the sky. The formerly rain-drench ground was immediately dried as were the clothes worn by those in attendance.

One of the principal anti-cleric publications of the day, a major Lisbon newspaper called *O Dia*, dispatched at least two of its reporters to the Cova da Iria to report on the culmination of what they believed was a great hoax being perpetrated on the faithful people of Portugal. Like their counterparts from *O Seculo*, they were there for the purpose of discrediting the children and exposing the incendiary lies that they had been spreading for the past six months. Now, in utter amazement, and with a feeling of

undisclosed terror, they wrote on their notepads all that they had just witnessed. How could these events possibly be explained to the anti-clerics who governed the region? How would their own credibility be viewed if the truth of the miracle of Fatima were to be reported? Yet, could those events that their own eyes had witnessed be explained any other way?

Even some people who were not present at Cova da Iria that day reported witnessing the miracle. Credible witnesses such as the poet Affonso Lopes Vieira, who lived in S. Pedro de Moel, some 25 miles from Fatima, saw it from his home. A nine-year old boy, who would later grow to become Fr. Inacio Lourenco, saw it from Alburita approximately 12 miles away, as he walked from school with several of his classmates and their teacher, Dona Delfina Pereira Lopes. All of them observed the spectacle of the dancing sun that day. Fr. Lourenco would later write,

“It was like a globe of snow revolving on itself. Then suddenly it seemed to come down in a zigzag, threatening to fall on the earth. Terrified, I ran to shelter myself in the midst of the people. All were weeping, expecting from one moment to the next the end of the world. Near us was an unbeliever without religion, who had spent the morning mocking the blockheads who had made all that journey to Fatima to go and stare at a girl. I looked at him. He stood as if paralyzed, thunderstruck, his eyes fixed on the sun. Then I saw him tremble from head to foot, and raising his hands to heaven, he fell on his knees in the mire, shouting, Nossa Senhora! Nossa Senhora! Translated, Our Lady! Our Lady!

Meanwhile the people continued to scream and cry out, begging God to pardon their sins. ...Afterwards we ran to the chapels of the town, which were filled in a few moments. During those long minutes of the solar phenomenon objects all about us reflected all the colors of the rainbow. As we looked at one another, one seemed blue, another yellow, another vermilion. ...All these strange phenomena increased the terror of the crowd. After about ten minutes the sun returned to its place in the same way it had descended, still pale and without splendor...”^[103]

Lucia's sister Teresa was present on this day as well to witness the happenings. She again took note, as she had in August, that the sky was snowing flowers and emanating the same "rainbowlike light all over the ground and the people. The people looked up to see where the light was coming from," she said, "and they saw the sun spinning around." She also observed that "people could look at it as at the 'newly risen moon;' it was 'spinning down.'" ^[104] The spinning lasted for only a short time but what really captivated her attention was the falling flowers. They seemed to be "multicolored petals," she insisted, "but when they came close enough to see what they were, they disappeared." ^[105]

From her vantage point some distance back, Maria saw the same sundance that others were seeing, but a man standing next to her "said he saw a figure, a very beautiful form between two lights." After the Apparition, she also observed a man named Carlos Mendes, who later became the president of the municipality of Torres Novas, "put Lucia on his shoulder and carry her out to the crowd." He then had her stand on a rock and asked her to tell everyone what the "Blessed Virgin said." Lucia complied. ^[106]

PART IV
THE AFTERMATH

SATURDAY OCTOBER 13, 1917

3:00 PM – 11:00 PM

Many in the mass of 70,000 people began to leave, some to begin the long trek back home. Many others stayed and followed Lucia and her cousins hoping for maybe just a word with them and were still milling in the streets around their homes when Fr. Formigao arrived in Aljustrel at about 7:00 PM. He too wanted to speak to the children and hoped to do so before anyone else had a chance to speak with them and more importantly, before they could compare notes. Formigao was not present when the miracle occurred, but certainly had heard others speak of the amazing events of that afternoon. He used his authority to disperse the crowds and then gathered the children at the Marto home where he spoke to each separately. Except for the visions witnessed only by Lucia, their stories were virtually identical leaving some very minor discrepancies and one, relating to the size and rough age of the infant Jesus, that was of greater substance. Of course, Francisco could not hear the Lady so he could not testify as to what was said, rather only to what Lucia and Jacinta told him was said.

Fr. Formigao could see that the children were pale from exhaustion and agreed to return later to complete his examination. Eventually, everyone departed the area leaving behind trampled fields and no doubt talking about the miraculous events they had witnessed, comparing notes as to what one may have seen that another had not. For a short time, at least, the children could enjoy some time alone with family. Certainly, there was much to talk about!

SUNDAY OCTOBER 14, 1917

In addition to the *O Dia* reporters, several other newspaper reporters were present to witness the miracle, including a correspondent for the major News Services in the United States. The following day, “from Lisbon, he cabled a long and impressive story about the Miracle of the Sun. Despite the enormity of the report, it was never published.”^[107] As Americans worried about the war and mourned the loss of some of the approximately 116 thousand Americans already counted among the war dead, baseball had become a most needed diversion. On October 13th, as Our Lady moved the

sun in the Portugal sky, The Chicago White Sox, the hottest team in American baseball, having just completed an astounding regular season with a record of 100-54, were embroiled in game five of the 1917 World Series. The drama of the Series dominated the American newspapers and the White Sox dramatic 8-5 come-from-behind victory over the New York Giants in game five sent the series back to the Polo Grounds of New York for a game six.^[108]

Save the events of World War I and the Baseball World Series, little else seemed to matter to the American people. In fact, twenty-five years would pass before whisperings of the Miracle at Fatima would begin to circulate around the United States.

Regardless of who else in the world took notice, the events of Saturday, October 13th were enough to finally convince Maria Rosa that something extraordinary had indeed happened to her daughter Lucia, her niece Jacinta and her nephew Francisco. When Teresa tried to tell her about the falling flowers that she witnessed in August, Maria Rosa dismissed her saying it was “ridiculous” and noting that her daughters were “all crazy.” Yet after witnessing for herself the events that occurred just a few hours before, even a hardened critic such as she could no longer refute that something supernatural had occurred. Teresa said of her mother, “In October, she saw the wonders and then became convinced.”^[109]

MONDAY AND TUESDAY OCTOBER 15 - 16, 1917

Despite the lack of interest shown in the United States, there was no bigger news in Portugal, and for more than the next few days the people of Fatima were abuzz with what had occurred at the Cova on Saturday. Those who witnessed the great miracle were still in a state of utter amazement. Those that were now hearing about it second-hand had very mixed emotions. The faithful believed every utterance coming from the mouths of the eye witnesses while those naturally cynical toward such matters questioned each word stretching to find a logical reason for what they were being told.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1917

Then on October 17th, *O Dia*, the major newspaper of the region, finally reported on the events that took place on Saturday, the thirteenth day of October, in the little hamlet of Fatima. The article read,

“A spectacle unique and incredible if one had not been a witness of it.... One can see the immense crowd turn toward the sun, which reveals itself free of the clouds in full noon. The great star of day makes one think of a silver plaque, and it is possible to look straight at it without the least discomfort. It does not burn, it does not blind, it might be like an eclipse. But now bursts forth a colossal clamor, and we hear the nearest spectators crying, ‘Miracle, miracle! Marvel, marvel!’

Before the astonished eyes of the people, whose attitude carries us back to biblical times and who, full of terror, heads uncovered, gaze into the blue of the sky, the sun has trembled, and the sun has made some brusque movements, unprecedented and outside of all cosmic laws-the sun has ‘danced,’ according to the typical expression of the peasants. An old man whose stature and face, at once gentle and energetic, recall those of Paul Deroulede, turns toward the sun and recites the Credo with loud cries from beginning to end. I ask his name. It is Senhor Joao Maria Amado de Melo Ramalho da Cunha Vasconcelos. I see him afterwards addressing those about him who have kept their hats on, begging them vehemently to uncover before so extraordinary a demonstration of the existence of God. Similar scenes are repeated in all places.

The people ask one another if they have seen anything and what they have seen. The greatest number avow that they have seen the trembling and dancing of the sun. Others, however, declare that they have seen the smiling face of the Virgin herself; swear that the sun turned around on itself like a wheel of fireworks; that it fell, almost to the point of burning the earth with its rays. ...Another tells that he has seen it change color successively....

Almost three o’clock. The sky is limpid and the sun follows its

course with its habitual brilliancy so that no one dares to look at it directly. And the shepherds?... Lucia, the one who speaks to the Virgin, announces with theatrical motions, on the neck of a man who carries her from group to group, that the war is going to end and that the soldiers are coming home. Such news, however, does not increase the joy of those who hear her. The celestial Sign, that is everything. Much curiosity, nevertheless, to see the two little girls with their garlands of roses; some try to kiss the hand of the 'little saints'” and one of the two, Jacinta, is much nearer to fainting than to dancing. But what all aspired for - the Sign in the Sky - has sufficed to satisfy them, to enroot them in their Breton-like faith....

Their dispersion follows rapidly and without incidents, without the shadow of disorder, without the need of any intervention of police patrols. The pilgrims who leave first, in haste to be on their way, are those who arrived first with their shoes on their heads or hung on their staves. They are going, their souls full of joy, to spread the good news in the villages that were not wholly depopulated to come here. And the priests? Some have shown themselves on the scene, standing rather with the curious spectators than in the company of pilgrims avid for celestial favors. Perhaps now and then one does not manage to conceal the satisfaction which appears so often on the faces of those who triumph. ...It remains for those competent to pronounce on the dance macabre of the sun, which today, at Fatima, has made hosannas burst from the breasts of the faithful and naturally has impressed - so witnesses worthy of belief assure me - even freethinkers and other persons not at all interested in religious matters who have come to this once famous countryside.”^[110]

The report quickly made its way throughout Portugal and beyond. For many of the more than 70,000 eye witnesses to the Miracle of the Sun, life regained some of its normalcy in the days that followed. Life for the children, on the other hand, had been irrevocably altered both mentally and spiritually.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1917

The children were still quite fatigued when Fr. Formigao returned at the end of the week, and Lucia's memory of recent events during this round of questioning, was not as vivid as those of earlier events. Regardless, Formigao was convinced that the children had been honest with him and he became a believer in the reality of the Apparitions. He also began to defend the children against any adversary of the spiritual events. Despite his efforts, the persecution would come not only from the Freemasons and the Carbonari, but from other Catholics, including priests, as well. It was the former groups, however, who met secretly that week to formulate a strategy to not only defend against believers, but to launch a counter-attack as well.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1917

On this night, several Freemason loyalists and other henchmen of the Administrator assembled in Ourem. Included in the group was a man known as Cemetery Frank. Armed with hatchets, axes and lanterns, the men loaded into several automobiles, and departed Ourem for the Cova da Aria where they intended to demolish any evidence of the Apparitions, including the holm-oak tree on which Our Lady appeared. They hoped that by destroying the relics, the rallying point of the faithful would be vanquished.

Upon arrival, the raiders chopped down the tree, and carried away any-thing that had been constructed or left at the site, including the table that Maria Carreira placed, and the lanterned arch that had been built there. After placing these items on display for a short time the marauders paraded them "through the streets, singing blasphemous litanies to the accompaniment of drums."^[111]

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1917

Word of the "shrine's" destruction began to spread throughout the village creating anger from Moita to Aljustrel. Many, including Maria Carreira departed for the Cova, there to find the artifacts stolen as had been reported. However, to their joy, they learned that the raiders chopped down the wrong tree. The holm-oak tree on which Our Lady had appeared still stood proudly as an enduring symbol of the miracle at Fatima. The entire

affair backfired on the Administrator as pilgrimage to the area increased. Maria Carreira returned frequently and one cold morning came upon a man who slept on the ground the entire night after walking thirty-eight miles to get there. When asked, the man told her, “I am glad I came. I feel very happy in this place.”^[112]

THE DAYS FOLLOWING OCTOBER 24, 1917

Over the ensuing days, Lucia’s two parents would react quite differently to the miracle that they witnessed at the Cova. Antonio remained bitter that the large crowds had destroyed his land. Nothing could grow on the hard, trampled ground and planting, even on softened ground, would prove futile as the thousands of people who continued the pilgrimage to Fatima would crush them under foot anyway. For her part, Maria Rosa now believed that Lucia had told the truth and tried to comply with the requests of Our Lady as explained by her daughter. Recitations of the family Rosary became a nightly occurrence and Lucia was enrolled in a small day school that had recently been started by the monarchy near the church in Fatima. There she could learn to read and write as Our Lady asked. Much to Lucia’s delight, Maria Rosa also convinced Olimpia to enroll Jacinta as well.

The children grew in devotion to Our Lady and Her message. They remained in prayer at virtually every opportunity. They often prayed at the Cova da Iria or the Cabeco and continued their efforts to avoid pilgrims though sometimes unsuccessfully. At times, their prayers resulted in cures or other miraculous happenings. Such was the case one day when the children were discovered by a group of curiosity seekers. Unable to hide, the children were surrounded and those present began to ask questions. One man picked Jacinta up and placed her on a wall so they could hear her better. Another tried to do the same to Francisco who was able to get away and climb on a different wall not too great a distance away. A woman from the parish of San Mamede, and her young son, approached Francisco and held out their arms to him pleading that he ask Our Lady to heal her sick husband and protect him from the war. Francisco began to say his Rosary and the crowd followed him in prayer. A short time later, they all moved to the Cova saying another Rosary along the way. The group eventually dispersed, but the woman returned a few days later to thank Our Lady. She was accompanied by her husband who had been restored to health.

Another day, Lucia's sister Teresa returned from Lomba, where she now lived with her husband, to ask Lucia to pray for the son of a woman who had been falsely accused of, and arrested for, a crime that he did not commit. He faced a long prison term and exile. Francisco, upon being told the story, was visibly upset and promised to pray at St. Anthony's Church while Jacinta and Lucia were in school. He was still kneeling in prayer when the girls returned from school. There, Francisco told Lucia that she could tell her sister that the boy would be released in a few days. On the thirteenth of the next month, the woman of Lomba made the trek to the Cova to give thanks to Our Lady for her son returned home just as Francisco said.

MAY 1918

Francisco desired nothing more on earth than to receive the "Hidden Jesus" in the Eucharist. Though a year older than Jacinta, they studied their catechism together beginning in the summer of 1917. Nine-year old Jacinta hoped to be granted permission to receive the sacrament prior to reaching the age of ten as local custom required. She knew exceptions could be made as Lucia was allowed to receive at the age of six.

In May of 1918, Manuel Marto presented his two children to Fr. Ferreira for questioning. Jacinta passed, but for the second time, Francisco did not. This time he cried as he knew his time on earth was short. Yet, he offered his disappointment in prayer saying, "It is for your love, O my Jesus!"^[113]

Around this time, the local Bishops were completing their investigation of the apparitions of Fatima determining that "the apparitions were 'worthy of belief.'" Local residents immediately marked the site with a cross and, later in the year, a small chapel was built from rock and limestone and covered in tile. It was a very small structure measuring only 11 ft. by 9.2 ft. in length and 9.4 ft. in height, but it became the center for Marian devotion, receiving names such as *a fe Fatima*, *cidade da Paz* ("The faith of Fatima, City of Peace.") or *Terra de Milagres e Aparicoes* ("Land of Miracles and Apparitions.")^[114]

OCTOBER 1918

The influenza was a terrible scourge and had killed many throughout the world. In October of 1918 the Spanish flu pandemic found the little Village of Aljustrel.^[115] All in the dos Santos family except Lucia were infected. Similarly, all in the Marto household save Manuel, were stricken with the virus. Manuel and Olimpia were heartbroken as Francisco became gravely ill. Though confined to his single iron bed with its patchwork quilt, ornate colored metal back topped off with two brass knobs, he complied with every request of his parents to eat, take his medicine, drink, etc. but promised them that it was to no avail as “Our Lady was coming to take him to heaven.” He regretted only being unable to go to the Church of St. Anthony’s to pray before the hidden Jesus.

A few days after Francisco, Jacinta became symptomatic complaining of a terrible headache and an insatiable thirst. Yet, she refused to drink because she wanted to suffer for sinners. Lucia spent every available moment with her when she wasn’t in school or tending to her chores. One morning when Lucia stopped in to visit while on her way to school, Jacinta said, “Listen! Tell the Hidden Jesus that I like Him very much, that I really love Him very much indeed.” On other days, she would ask Lucia to “tell Jesus that I send Him my love, and long to see Him.”



As Our Lady promised the children, Francisco and Jacinta would go to heaven soon. Lucia dos Santos, on the other hand would remain on the earth a long time as God chose her to carry his message to the world.

Yet, Jacinta was so unselfish that whenever Lucia visited her room first, Jacinta would tell her to “go and see Francisco” so she could make the sacrifice of “staying here alone.”

One day when her mother brought her a cup of milk, Jacinta pushed it away with her hand saying she didn’t want it. Jacinta’s mother offered a little resistance then left the room saying, “I don’t know how to make her take anything; she has no appetite.” Lucia scolded Jacinta for disobeying her mother and not making the sacrifice for the Lord. At hearing this Jacinta

cried. As Lucia wiped her tears, Jacinta said, “I forgot this time.” She called her mother in the room as asked for forgiveness offering to take whatever her mother wanted her to take. When her mother returned with the milk, Jacinta drank it down with no sign of repugnance. Jacinta later told Lucia that it was very hard to drink that milk. As time went on, it became harder and harder for her to take milk and broth, but she didn’t complain at all so she could suffer for love of the Lord, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Once, when Lucia asked Jacinta if she was getting better, she replied, “You know I’m not getting better. I’ve such pains in my chest! But I don’t say anything. I’m suffering for the conversion of sinners.” She even refrained from visiting Francisco’s room as a sacrifice for the conversion of sinners.

During one visit, Lucia found Jacinta unusually elated. “Look, Lucia!” Jacinta noted, “Our Lady came to see us here, and she said that she is coming very soon to take Francisco to heaven. And she asked me if I still wanted to convert more sinners and I said yes. Our Lady wants me to go to two hospitals, but not to be cured. It is to suffer more for the love of God, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for the offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” Jacinta went on to say that it would be her mother, and not Lucia, who would take her to the hospital and then leave her there. ^[116]

After saying this Jacinta fell into thought for a while and added, “If only you could be with me! The hardest part is to go without you. Maybe, the hospital is a big dark house, where you can’t see, and I’ll be there suffering all alone! But never mind! I’ll suffer for love of Our Lord, to make reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the conversion of sinners and for the Holy Father.” ^[117]

DECEMBER 1918

The Marto family prayed fervently that their children might recover from their illness, but the children knew that was not to be. As December approached, however, Francisco’s fever did begin to normalize and his pulse grew stronger and by Christmas he was able to get up for a short while each day until it looked like he may make a full recovery.

1919

JANUARY 1919

Following the Christmas and New Year's holidays, Francisco appeared at full strength. He began his daily routine of reciting the Angel's prayer at the Cabeco or the Rosary at the Cova da Iria. On one day, though suffering from a strong headache, he walked to Fatima where he knelt before the altar, consoling the hidden Jesus for quite some time. As much as he wanted only to pray, the pilgrims would not leave him alone. One day he returned home from prayer to find his house full of strangers asking that he bless their Rosaries, medals, crucifixes and other objects of prayer. They left only after he assured them that he was unable to bless anything as he wasn't a priest. He could hear some shout insults to him as they departed.

Before the calendar page turned to February Francisco was ill once again. Despite his family's attempts to make him think he would recover as he did before, he knew better. "Our Lady is coming very soon now," he told them. His godmother Teresa promised to tell Our Lady that she would offer Francisco's weight in wheat to the poor for the return of his health, but the boy responded, "It's not worth your trouble. Our Lady will not grant you this grace."^[118] Just a few days later, Francisco's health declined radically and he found himself once again bed ridden. He was convinced that his body would not leave the bed until he was taken to heaven and his health continued its downward slide.

JANUARY 1919 – MARCH 1919

Jacinta, meanwhile, never made such a temporary recovery, but despite her illness, she would sneak into Francisco's room when she was sure that no one else was in the house. There they would talk for as long as possible, that is, until her indiscretion was discovered and she was forbidden to repeat it. Lucia stopped in everyday on her way home from school to inquire of any sacrifices Jacinta made that day. It was, for the most part, the highlight of the little girl's day, able to tell Lucia how she refrained from going to Francisco's room even when everyone was out.

Francisco was in constant pain now, flushed with fever, his eyes large and bright, though rather than complain, he told Lucia that he accepted the pain as a means of consoling Our Lord. "When you go, don't forget to ask Our Lady to take me there soon also," Lucia said to her cousin. "I won't ask that," Francisco replied. "You know very well that She doesn't want you there yet."^[119]

APRIL 1, 1919

When April began, Francisco was so weak that he couldn't even recite the Rosary. His mother suggested that he just say it in his heart noting that "Our Lady hears it just the same and is just as pleased."^[120] This seemed to make him happy as he managed to purse his lips in an attempted smile. Francisco wanted to see Lucia and seemed desperate as he communicated this to his mother. Olimpia sent for Lucia at once and very soon thereafter, she was in Francisco's bedroom standing at his side. "Look, Lucia, I am very sick, and I am going to heaven very soon." He then conveyed a list of things he wanted Lucia to ask Jacinta adding, "I want to go to confession," a wish Lucia conveyed to her aunt and uncle.

By nightfall, he was much worse and his parents promised to send word to the Rectory first thing in the morning asking the priest to come to hear their son's final confession.

APRIL 2, 1919

At dawn the following morning, Francisco asked his sister Teresa to get Lucia as he needed to speak with her at once. Awakened by Teresa at about 6:00 AM, Lucia dressed quickly and hurried to Francisco's bedside. Francisco asked his mother, brother John and two sisters to leave so he could share a secret with his cousin. They complied and Francisco told Lucia that he was going to confess his sins so that he could receive Communion and then die. "I want you to tell me if you have seen me commit any sin and ask Jacinta if she has seen me commit any."^[121] After speaking with Jacinta, Lucia reported back to Francisco that Jacinta remembered that he had stolen a small coin from his father to purchase a hand-organ. Lucia recalled that he threw stones back at some children who first threw stones at him, and that he disobeyed his mother when she told him to stop staying in the house. Francisco renewed his sorrow for those sins, though acknowledging that he had previously confessed them and vowed to never repeat them even if he shall live. He then said an Act of Contrition.

APRIL 3, 1919

As the new day arrived, Francisco lay quietly awaiting the priest and

opened his eyes only when he heard the ringing of the little bell signaling that the priest arrived with communion. Olimpia placed some lighted candles on a table near his bed and, though he was too weak to sit up, Francisco peered at the priest raising the Eucharist above him receiving Jesus in the Host for the first time as he lay dying in bed.

As Francisco's final hours drew near, Jacinta was allowed to visit his room. When he saw her he said, Today I am happier than you, for I have within my breast the hidden Jesus. I am going to heaven, but there I will pray a great deal to Our Lord and our Lady that they bring you there too, soon."^[122] Jacinta remained with Francisco all day, sometimes helping him say the Rosary when he was too weak to do so and at other times, just looking at him while sitting at the edge of his bed. Lucia stopped by after school as well. They spoke for a while and Lucia, doubting that she might ever see him again, said, "Goodbye, Francisco. If you go to heaven tonight, don't forget me there, do you hear?" Taking her right hand in his, he said, "I won't forget you, no. Don't worry." Soon Lucia's aunt came to send her home. "Then goodbye, Francisco, till heaven. Goodbye till heaven," she repeated and left the room crying.

Before leaving his room, Jacinta whispered to her brother, "Give all my love to Our Lord and Our Lady and tell them that I'll suffer as much as they want, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

Francisco grew weaker by the minute so that by nightfall he could no longer take milk and despite his thirst could swallow only a few drops of water. Yet, when asked, he would say, "I'm all right, don't give me anything."^[123]

10:00 AM, APRIL 4, 1919

His condition was relatively unchanged the following morning. Just prior to 10:00 AM, Francisco looked at his mother and asked forgiveness for any trouble he had caused her in his life and then he focused on the Eucharist he had received just a day prior. Francisco Marto died on April 4, 1919 in that hour passing almost without notice. There was still a faint smile on his lips when Jacinta and Lucia came to see his lifeless body lying on the bed.

APRIL 5, 1919

Several men from the Misericordia, walked slowly up the cobblestone road to Fatima. An acolyte carried a crucifix held high. He was followed by four boys dressed in white carrying a coffin containing the remains of Francisco as his grieving parents and a few others walked behind. Entering through the cemetery gate, the boys laid the small coffin down in a grave just inside the gate. Jacinta was still too sick to attend and Lucia went to the cemetery by herself later in the day placing a little cross on the grave.



Francisco Marto died on April 4, 1919, just short of two years after he first saw Our Lady of the Rosary. Just prior to his death, the eleven-year old boy asked his mother's forgiveness for any trouble he had caused her in his short life. His small casket was carried by four boys dressed in white.

APRIL 5, 1919 – JULY 1, 1919

Shortly after the death of Francisco, Jacinta was moved into the bed where he had died. It was a more convenient location and provided her an opportunity to see and hear people better as it was closer to the door. Lucia was a big comfort to her, especially in the early days following Francisco's death as Jacinta missed him terribly. She spent hours in thought and when asked said she was thinking about how much she missed her brother. As her eyes filled with tears she would say that she would "give anything to see him again." One day, Lucia said to Jacinta, "It won't be long now till you go to heaven, but what about me!" Jacinta comforted her saying, "You poor thing! Don't cry! I'll pray lots and lots for you when I'm there. As for you, that's the way Our Lady wants it. If she wanted that for me, I'd gladly stay and suffer more for sinners."

JULY – AUGUST 1919

Jacinta's health continued to deteriorate and was now punctuated by sharp pain in her chest cavity that worsened with each breath. The doctor said she had Pleurisy, a condition caused by inflammation of the linings around the lungs. Her thoughts drifted to the vision she had of Our Lady telling her

that she would go to the hospital and be kept alone in a dark place until her death. She believed this would be her end, yet she also believed that, though incapacitated and perhaps removed from her family, she could still do much good.

She focused on helping others even while lying in excruciating pain. When Lucia's Aunt Victoria's brilliant, but erratic son couldn't be found for weeks, Jacinta prayed to Our Lady to deliver him safely home. After just a few days, he returned with a strange story indeed. It seems he had left home and spent all his money having to resort to theft for survival. He was eventually arrested and jailed in Torres Novas until one night when he found a means of escape. Fleeing to the mountains he hid there, but a terribly violent thunderstorm frightened him to prayer. Asking God's forgiveness, he fell to his knees praying in the rain for a safe return home. Shortly thereafter, he saw a small child emerge from the darkness. He recognized immediately that it was Jacinta as she took his hand and led him from the mountain on the road that leads from Alqueidao to Reguengo. At which point she made a sign that he should continue in that direction and then she vanished. The young man eventually came to a bridge that he recognized. It was near Boleiros, not far from where he lived in Fatima. After his safe return home, Lucia questioned Jacinta who said nothing of bilocation, admitting only that she "had prayed a great deal for the young man."^[124]

The doctors advised Manuel and Olimpia Marto that their daughter would not recover at home and needed surgery and care that could be provided only in a hospital. She now had purulent pleurisy that resulted from the bronchial pneumonia. So, on a mid-July morning, Manuel lifted Jacinta on the back of a mule and took her to St. Augustine's Hospital in Vila Nove de Ourem. Upon admission, Jacinta realized that her room was bright and rather cheerful, not at all the dark place Our Lady indicated her mother would take her.

Olimpia visited her and found her in good spirits with no complaints, although Jacinta mentioned how she longed to see Lucia. Lucia was having a bad summer too as her father Antonio became ill and died on July 31, 1919. Following her brother's death, Olimpia agreed to take Lucia with her to visit Jacinta, despite the hardship that it imposed. As soon as Jacinta saw Lucia she gave her a joyful hug. She asked her mother to leave Lucia in the hospital with her while her mother went shopping. She told Lucia, in response to her question, that she was indeed suffering a lot, but she "offers everything for

sinner, and in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” Then, filled with enthusiasm, she spoke of Our Lord and Our Lady. ‘Oh, how much I love to suffer for love of Them, just to give Them pleasure! They greatly love those who suffer for the conversion of sinners.’” As the allotted time for the visit ended, Jacinta asked her mother to bring Lucia again next visit, which she gladly did. That visit found Jacinta just about the same, happy to suffer for the love of our Good God and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for sinners and for the Holy Father. “That was her ideal and she could speak of nothing else.”^[125]

AUGUST 31, 1919

Jacinta’s health did not much improve following her surgery, in fact, it worsened and she still suffered a great deal of pain, but the Martos were out of money. Manuel did his best, but could no longer afford the \$1.35 it cost him for each day Jacinta remained in the hospital. On the last day of August, Manuel checked her out of St. Augustine’s in Vila Nova de Ourem returning Jacinta home to their care for a while. She had a large surgical wound in her chest which had to be treated every day, and she was almost unrecognizable; very thin, looking pale and emaciated, but she bore the transfer without complaint.

OCTOBER 13, 1919

During her days at home Jacinta’s health failed even more rapidly. By October, she had developed tuberculosis and Dr. Formigao came to see her. He had made the pilgrimage, along with 600 faithful people, to the Cova da Iria on the second anniversary of the great miracle. He found Jacinta as “a living skeleton, her arms nothing but bones, her face all eyes, her cheeks wasted by fever.” Yet he could do nothing but suggest placement in a really good sanitarium.

Surprisingly though, Jacinta’s health improved during the warm days of autumn allowing her to leave her bed, go outside and even attend Mass at Fatima on Sunday. Much to her delight, she was even able to venture to Cova da Iria a time or two. Her parents were understandably upset when they discovered that she had done this and put a stop to it immediately much to the

chagrin of little Jacinta. As the first blast of cold air arrived, however, her fever returned leaving Jacinta bedridden once again. She accepted this cheerfully as she was still able to prostrate herself and recite the Rosary each day, but eventually, even this became difficult. She confided in Lucia, “When I am alone I get out of bed to say the prayers of the Angel, but now I can’t put my head on the floor anymore, because I fall, so I pray only on my knees.”^[126] With each passing day Jacinta grew closer to Jesus and Mary in prayer and sacrifice and on three different occasions, Our Lady appeared to Jacinta in her bedroom and spoke to her with words of encouragement.

DECEMBER 1919

The final of these appearances occurred in December 1919 and Our Lady spoke to Jacinta of “new crosses and sacrifices awaiting her.”^[127] “Our Lady came to see me last night,” Jacinta told Lucia, “and told me that I am going to Lisbon to another hospital; that I will not see you again, nor my parents either, and after suffering a great deal, I shall die alone. But she said I must not be afraid, since she herself is coming to take me to heaven.” The two hugged and Jacinta wept, “I will never see you again! You won’t be coming to visit me there. Oh please, pray hard for me, because I am going to die alone!”

Dying alone seemed to be her biggest fear. One day Lucia brought Jacinta a stamp on which was a picture of the Mother of Sorrows. Jacinta gazed upon it with an anguished look on her face and then began to cry. “Oh, my little Mother of Heaven,” she sobbed with a tear-soaked face, “do I really have to die alone?” But when reminded that Our Lady would take her personally to Heaven, she would find total comfort.

Jacinta also lamented having to die without receiving the hidden Jesus wishing that “Our Lady would bring Him to me, when she comes to fetch me!” One-day Lucia asked Jacinta what she would do in Heaven. “I’m going to love Jesus very much, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, too. I’m going to pray a lot for you, for sinners, for the Holy Father, for my parents and my brothers and sisters, and for all the people who have asked me to pray for them...” When she noticed her mother looking sad at seeing her child so sick, Jacinta would comfort her saying, “Don’t worry, mother. I’m going to Heaven, and there I’ll be praying so much for you,” or “Don’t cry. I’m alright.” She would always refuse offerings but would later tell Lucia how

she refused only as a sacrifice for sinners. Yet Jacinta insisted that Lucia never tell her mother how much she was suffering so as not to upset her.^[128]

EARLY JANUARY 1920

Right up until the day of her departure for the hospital in Lisbon, the smallest visionary suffered great anguish at the thought of never seeing Lucia or her family again, and of dying without them... alone. Lucia advised her not to think about it. "Let me think about it," Jacinta responded, "for the more I think the more I suffer, and I want to suffer for love of Our Lord and for sinners. Anyway, I don't mind! Our Lady will come to me there and take me to heaven." At other times, she would kiss and embrace the crucifix saying as she did, "O my Jesus! I love you, and I want to suffer very much for love of You." She very often said, "O Jesus! Now You can convert many sinners, because this is a really big sacrifice!"

The thought of never seeing Jacinta again caused Lucia to suffer greatly as well though no one other than Lucia really took the talk of hospitals in Lisbon very seriously. Lisbon was, after all, a ninety-mile trip and the Martos knew that they could not afford another hospital stay for Jacinta even if it were required. That all changed in January 1920 when an automobile pulled up to the Marto home. Manuel and Olimpia watched with curiosity as Dr. Formigao exited the vehicle with two strangers who turned out to be noted ophthalmologist Dr. Enrico Lisboa and his wife. Dr. Formigao had spoken much of little Jacinta to Dr. Enrico who had taken a special interest in her case. A quick examination was all the doctor needed to understand that the girl would die without the care provided in a hospital. He used his connections and along with a few of his friends acting as financial benefactors, was able to arrange for the hospital stay.

JANUARY 20, 1920

While this all came as somewhat of a shock to the family, Jacinta was expecting it and actually felt better now that it was happening. While awaiting the necessary arrangements to be made by the doctor and his friends, Jacinta convinced her mother, who along with a neighbor, took the little girl to the Cova da Iria for one last visit. There, they knelt to say the Rosary. Afterward, Jacinta picked some wild flowers which she carefully

placed in the little chapel that had been built where the holm-oak stood. With this offering, she knelt by the small tree to say a prayer, then after being helped up by her mother, mounted the mule for the journey home.

JANUARY 21, 1920

The very next morning, Jacinta said goodbye to her father and then, turning to Lucia, hugged her very tightly. Lucia's heart broke and she held her little cousin in her arms for a long time. Both cried as Jacinta said, "We shall never meet again. Pray for me a lot till I go to heaven, and afterwards I'll pray a lot for you. Never tell anybody the secret even if they kill you. Love Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary a great deal and make many sacrifices for sinners. Goodbye, Lucia."

Jacinta was taken to the train station by her mother and older brother Antonio who accompanied her on the trip, a train ride that took four to five-hours and was very taxing for Jacinta. In Lisbon, they were met by three well-dressed ladies that turned out to be friends of the Baron. After many hours, they finally secured lodging where Olimpia, Jacinta and Antonio remained for a week after which time a more permanent place was found at the Catholic orphanage near the Church of Our Lady of Miracles, run by a Franciscan nun by the name of Dona Maria da Purificacao Godinho.^[129] Madre Godinho had a special devotion to Our Lady and had longed to meet the children to whom She appeared. Upon learning that one of the children was now in her care, she took the child to her heart like a mother, placing Jacinta each day by the sunny window overlooking the Garden of the Estrela.

Jacinta enjoyed living in the convent especially knowing that the hidden Jesus had a home there as well. She attended Mass and received the hidden Jesus every day and on quick order, Mother Godinho believed that a saint was living under her roof. She noticed how Jacinta avoided the other girls except to give them motherly advice on obedience and truthfulness. She spoke with authority and the nun would sometime draw her into conversation and carefully write down some of the more striking things the child would say.

One-day Jacinta noted to Mother Godinho, "Our Lady wants my sisters Teresa (15 years of age) and Florinda (16 years of age) to be nuns. My mother doesn't want them to be, but for this Our Lady will take them to heaven before long."^[130]

FEBRUARY 2 – FEBRUARY 9, 1920

Despite Jacinta's enjoyment of life in the convent, her stay there was short. On February 2nd, the Feast of the Purification of Our Lady, she was transferred to the Hospital of Dona Stefania as prophesied by the Blessed Mother. Jacinta was assigned Bed 38, on the first floor of this rather dark, depressing place. Noted pediatrician and chief surgeon, Dr. Castro Freire, conducted a thorough examination confirming the diagnosis of purulent pleurisy that required another operation just as soon as little Jacinta was strong enough to handle it. "It won't do any good," Jacinta warned, "Our Lady came to tell me that I am going to die soon."^[131]

Jacinta was delighted one day as she looked up to see her father standing over her. He had made the long journey but had only a few hours to remain because some of his other children were sick and he was needed back home. She told him to let Lucia know that Our Lady had visited her in the hospital and told her the day and hour of her death.^[132] Jacinta also knew a great deal of other information told her by Our Lady and she shared those prophecies with others from time to time.

Mother Godinho, for example, visited Jacinta daily. On one particular day Godinho told her about a dynamic sermon delivered by a certain priest, one that was praised by fashionable ladies because of his theatrical voice and kind manner. Jacinta said, "When you least expect it, you will see that that priest is wicked." Just a few months later, the orator left the priesthood under rather scandalous circumstances.

On another occasion, Jacinta told a doctor who had asked for her prayers when she reached heaven that he and his daughter would die shortly after she passed; and they did. "To mother Godinho, who wanted to visit Cova da Iria; she said, "You will go -- but after my death; and so will I."

In fact, the extraordinary girl revealed during this time a great many little-known, but remarkable statements made by Our Lady, including:

"More souls go to hell because of sins of the flesh than for any other reason; Certain fashions will be introduced that will offend Our Lord very much; Many marriages are not good - they do not please Our Lord and are not of God; Priests must be pure, very pure - they should not busy themselves with anything except what concerns the Church

and souls; The disobedience of priests to their superiors and to the Holy Father is very displeasing to Our Lord; The Blessed Mother can no longer restrain the hand of her Divine Son from striking the world with just punishment for its many crimes; Tell everybody that God gives graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; Tell them to ask graces from her, and that the Heart of Jesus wishes to be venerated together with the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”^[133]

FEBRUARY 10, 1920

Jacinta was taken into surgery on February 10th, but her condition had so weakened her that the doctors could not use the chloroform or ether before performing the surgery and opted instead to use a local anesthesia. Dr. Castro Freire opened her left side and removed two ribs leaving a gap wide enough for him to insert his hands. The pain was excruciating and the child yelled, “Ai, Nossa Senhora!”^[134] Then she murmured, “Patience! We ought to suffer everything to go to heaven... It is for your love, my Jesus!... Now you can convert many sinners, for I suffer much.”^[135]

When the surgery was complete, the doctors felt success and Jacinta was returned to the same ward but was placed in Bed 60. Jacinta knew, however, that she would not recover and that her end was near though she suffered great pain for many additional days.

FEBRUARY 16, 1920

On this day Mother Godinho visited her special friend yet again and this time was told that Our Lady had appeared to her to say, “She was coming for me very soon and would take away my pains.”^[136]

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1920

6:00 – 8:00 PM

By this time Jacinta knew her time was near as Our Lady had informed her when her last day and hour would be. She called for her nurse, Aurora Gomez, at 6:00 PM to request the last sacraments. Two hours later,

Father Pereira dos Reis of the Church of the Holy Angels arrived to give the holy child the last rites of the Catholic Church. He promised to return the following morning to bring her Communion as well.

10:30 PM

Jacinta knew well, however, that she wouldn't be there in the morning. Nurse Gomez stepped out of her room for just a few moments. It was then that the Mother of God reached down to Bed 60 and took little Jacinta into her arms for her final journey, her suffering complete, her eternal happiness before her. Jacinta must have finally felt comfort in the arms that once held the baby Jesus for as the nurse returned, she saw Jacinta "breath her last sigh, a rosy flush on her cheeks, a half smile on her lips."^[137]

FEBRUARY 22, 1920

The news of Jacinta's death spread quickly and some of the faithful raised funds to support the funeral expenses. Burial would be at a cemetery in Lisbon. She was dressed in a white communion dress with a blue cape displaying the colors of Our Lady. Her body was placed in a white coffin and taken to the Church of the Holy Angels. There it was carefully placed in the sacristy across two small benches. So many people came to the church that it became necessary for Pastor Pereira dos Reis to drive them out of the sacristy and request that the body be taken to Casa do Despacho of the brotherhood of the Most Blessed Sacrament, where he locked the door and turned the key over to undertaker Antonio Rebelo de Almeida. When Baron de Alvaizere offered a grave in his plot in a cemetery in Ourem, the burial plans changed and the original burial site in Lisbon was abandoned.

FEBRUARY 23-24, 1920

Prior to applying the permanent seal to the casket, the undertaker allowed a few people to view the remains. All agreed that the body emanated an odor of flowers, and some insisted that the body still had flushed cheeks giving the impression of life. The next day the casket was sealed, transported from Rossio to Chao de Macas by train and then driven by automobile to Ourem. Only a few people from Aljustrel could make the journey to Ourem

for the funeral, but among them was a very distraught Manuel Marto who repeated through his tears over and over: “And you died there alone!” Olimpia and Lucia, though unable to attend the funeral services, eventually journeyed together to Ourem to visit the tiny grave of their beloved daughter and cousin.

The anti-clerics, for their part, were concerned only about any resulting devotion to this religious nonsense and immediately began to circulate rumors that the Catholic Church had both Francisco and Jacinta murdered to avoid contradictions in the stories of the three children of Fatima, of whom, only Lucia, and her version of events, remained. Despite their efforts, the many devout followers of Our Lady of Fatima resolved to vindicate the honor of the children.

AUGUST 5, 1920

The nation of Portugal was in a miserable state in 1920, politically, economically and morally, but the worse had not yet come. Between 1910 and 1926 there would be sixteen political revolutions and the government would change forty-three times. Those governments perpetuated revolts against Christianity. Pope Benedict XV noted in 1920 that “Morals are much more depraved and corrupt than formerly. The fond hope and wish of every renegade is the speedy rise of some universal state which is based on the complete equality of men and women and common ownership of property as a fundamental principle, in which neither any distinctions of nationality nor authority of parents over children, nor of public authority over citizens, nor of God over man living in society, is acknowledged. If these principles are put into practice, dreadful horrors must necessarily follow.”^[138]

Through the chaos, a new bishop was consecrated as head of the new diocese of Leiria. This area included all the Serra in which lay the Cova da Iria and Aljustrel. Pope Benedict had now made this an independent jurisdiction with the intelligent and charming Dom Jose Alves Correia as its vicar. At the time of his appointment, Correia served as a professor at the Seminary of Porto, but in his earlier days, suffered greatly at the hands of the Republic that tortured him by forcing him to stand, day and night, in ice water. The experience left Correia permanently disabled.

AUGUST 6, 1920 – JUNE 12, 1921

Though the new bishop was no stranger to suffering, this assignment presented a new challenge as the years of religious persecution at the hands of the Freemason government left many of the clerics scattered, exiled and without a source of income. The new diocese was dead broke and even large numbers of parishioners “had given up Mass and the sacraments.”^[139] With the hope of revitalization of the new diocese, one of Bishop Correira’s first acts was the consecration of his diocese to the Blessed Mother, and he did this symbolically on the feast of the Assumption in 1920. Shortly thereafter, Maria Carreira presented him with the funds collected at the site of the Fatima Apparitions, an amount that had now grown to some 357,000 reis, requesting that he use the money as he wished. This would prove no easy task as there were many forces at work, some faithful believers in the Apparitions of Fatima and others, including some priests, who argued that it was a delusion. Bishop Correira also had to consider the fodder that the use of such funds would provide to the enemies of the Church.

The new Bishop also faced the dilemma of Lucia. He believed that the anti-clerics posed a threat to her life because she was the sole survivor of the three visionaries, but also knew that many believers wanted to see her canonized into sainthood. As he wrestled with these issues, he sent word to Maria Rosa to bring Lucia to see him on June 13, 1921.

JUNE 13, 1921

Maria Rosa complied with the Bishop’s request arriving at his home at the appointed hour. After making idle chat for a short while, Bishop Correira asked Lucia if she might like to leave Aljustrel for an opportunity to attend a good school where she could fulfill Our Lady’s wishes by learning to read and write. Lucia was intrigued with the idea also realizing that a fresh start in a new place would help her with her grief. It might also put an end to the many visitors with their endless questions. Maria Rosa also liked the idea as such a move would reduce her stress as well. Their favorable reaction pleased the Bishop who suggested that Lucia could enter a school near Porto run by the Sisters of Saint Dorothy. He also suggested that she leave right away and tell no one where she was going. Additionally, she was to tell no

one at the new school who she was. Nor was she to speak of the Apparitions! To these requirements Lucia readily agreed.

JUNE 18, 1921

Lucia's last day in Aljustrel was taken up with visits to family and friends. She offered her goodbyes, yet complied with the Bishop's request to tell no one where she was going. Afterward, Lucia visited the Cabeco where the Angel had first appeared. She prostrated herself at the cave beside the rock where He had knelt and repeated the prayer He had given her. Rising to her feet, Lucia climbed over the rocks and down the slope to Valinhos to the site of the August 19, 1917 Apparition of Our Lady. Fieldstones now encircled the holm-oak tree on which She appeared. Lucia knelt beside the "shrine" and cried in grief for her two cousins and in love of Our Lady. She believed that she may never see this place again and found leaving very difficult. Finally, the sole-surviving visionary made her way to the Cova da Iria, walking to the holm-oak tree that once held the weight of Our Lady. She knelt, alone, recalling the words of encouragement spoken to her by the Mother of God. *"I am the Lady of the Rosary.... Do you suffer a great deal? Don't be discouraged. I will never forsake you."*^[140]

Lucia left for home, interrupting her journey for just three additional stops. One at St. Anthony's Church so she might say one final prayer there. A second at the grave of her cousin Francisco so she could say a last goodbye to him, and finally, to the home of her Aunt Olimpia and Uncle Manuel. In just two years they lost not only Francisco and Jacinta, but also their daughters Florinda and Teresa who died in 1920 and 1921 respectively, just as Jacinta had prophesied to Mother Godinho back in January of 1919. She bid them farewell, said a prayer in the room where Francisco had died, and left their home for hers with tear-filled eyes. She spent a few minutes at the well, ate supper, and went to bed.

JUNE 19, 1921

2:00 AM

Lucia heard her mother call. It was still very early -- 2:00 in the morning, but Manuel Carreira waited outside with the cart to take them to

Porto. They stopped briefly at the Chapel where they said the Rosary then departed for the nine-hour journey.

11:00 AM

Arriving in Leiria, the travelers were met by a lady that the Bishop had sent. She took them the rest of the way to the train station where she and Lucia boarded the train bound first for Alfarelos and then for Porto. “Goodbye,” Maria Rosa shouted to her fourteen-year old daughter. She wiped away her tears as the train slowly pulled away from the station.

JUNE 20, 1919 – OCTOBER 24, 1925

Lucia and her guide arrived at the Asilo of the Sisters of Saint Dorothy at Vilar early on the morning of June 20th. The daily Mass was already in progress and Lucia was in time to receive Holy Communion. Following Mass, Lucia was led to the sacristy where she was introduced to both the Chaplain and the Mother Superior, the latter of whom was doing a favor, against her better judgment, for her friend Bishop Correira.

“When they ask your name,” Mother Superior said, “you will reply, ‘Call me Maria of the Sorrows.’ When they ask you where you are from you will say, ‘I am from near Lisboa.’ As for what happened at Fatima, never again mention it to anyone, either by question or by answer. Not to anyone. Do you understand?” Lucia was compliant. “You will not go to walk with the other girls, but you will not say why you do not go. Do you understand, my dear?” Mother Superior continued. “Yes, Reverend Mother,” Lucia responded. “That is all,” Mother Superior said with a dismissive wave of her hand.

Lucia was led to her room where she would spend the better part of the next four years in patient compliance. Each day started with the Holy Mass, then a series of classes, then recreation followed by some manual work, prayers, and finally more schoolwork. Over the four years Lucia learned to embroider, sew, type, and cook. She spent many hours scrubbing floors, polishing brass and silver and waiting on tables. She kept her identity secret as instructed and never spoke of Fatima, not even to her mother who visited her a couple of times.

Over the years Lucia had come to love the convent and those who devoted their lives to the labor of helping to educate her. She found peace there and appreciated that the Bishop had sent her. She earned the respect and love of the others as they saw in her the unselfishness and extraordinary devotion to God that so characterized her.

Now, however, at eighteen years of age, it was time for Lucia to leave the convent school and enter the real world. She initially opted for the very difficult life of the Discalced Carmelites, but followed Mother Superior's advice against it. Eventually, she decided to enter the order of the Sisters of Saint Dorothy so that she would have more free time to go to the chapel and pray. And so, on October 24, 1925, Lucia joined the order as a postulant in Tuy, just across the border into Spain.

1925

DECEMBER 10, 1925

During her Appearance to the children on July 13, 1917, Our Lady promised Lucia that She would return

“to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays.” She also promised, *“If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”*

No doubt Lucia wondered throughout the past eight years what Our Lady meant by that message. On this day she would find out, as December 10, 1925 held the partial fulfillment of that promise. While sitting in her cell at the convent, Sister Lucia saw a familiar vision of “the most holy Virgin, and by her side, elevated on a luminous cloud, was a Child.” The Mother of God rested her hand on Lucia's shoulder, simultaneously revealing a heart encircled by thorns that She held in her other hand. The Child Jesus spoke

first saying

“Have compassion on the Heart of which ungrateful men pierce at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them.” As the Child finished, His most holy Mother said, “Look, my daughter, at my Heart surrounded by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce me every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You, at least, try to console me and say that I promise to assist, at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation of all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall go to confession, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary with the intention of making reparation to me.”^[141]

From this point on, Our Lady would return to Lucia at regular intervals to instruct her further and to offer her comfort. Perhaps to create an atmosphere appropriate for such visitations Lucia sought and obtained permission from her superiors and confessor to pray alone in the chapel every Thursday and Friday night from eleven o’clock until midnight. At least one of the future Apparitions would take place in this setting.

1927

DECEMBER 17, 1927

Our Lady appeared to Lucia once again on December 17, 1927 this time granting permission for Lucia to reveal the first two parts of the message of Fatima. These include the visions of the Angel; the promise to take the children to Heaven; the vision of hell; the predictions of another war, martyrdom for Christians, the destruction of nations, the persecution of the Church and of the Holy Father, and the spread of Communism. Until now, none of the children had revealed any part of the secrets.

1929

JUNE 13, 1929

BETWEEN 11:00 PM AND MIDNIGHT

Sometime before the clock struck Midnight on June 13, 1929, Our Lady returned to Lucia to fulfill a promise made to her over a decade ago during the July 13, 1917 Apparition; the promise to “...*come to ask for the consecration of Russia.*” While Lucia prayed alone in the Chapel of Dorotheas in the town of Tuy, she knelt in the middle of the darkened chapel near the altar rails. Prostrating herself, she prayed in the words of the Angel. After a time, she was overcome with fatigue and stood to complete her prayers with outstretched arms as if on a cross. Despite the room being lit with only the sanctuary light, the whole chapel was suddenly “illuminated by a supernatural light, and above the altar appeared a cross of light, reaching to the ceiling. In a brighter light on the upper part of the cross, could be seen the face of a man and his body as far as the waist, upon his breast was a dove of light, nailed to the cross was the body of another man.”

Lucia discerned a little above the Man’s waist, a chalice and a large host suspended in the air, “on to which drops of blood were falling from the face of Jesus Crucified and from the wound in His side. These drops ran down onto the host and fell into the chalice. Beneath the right arm of the cross was Our Lady and in Her hand, was her Immaculate Heart. (It was Our Lady of Fatima, with her Immaculate Heart in her left hand, without sword or roses, but with a crown of thorns and flames). Under the left arm of the cross, large letters, -as if of crystal clear water which ran down upon the altar, formed these words: ‘Grace and Mercy’.”

Lucia understood this to be the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity revealed, and she received insights about this mystery which she was not permitted to reveal. Our Lady then said to Lucia,

“The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father, in union with all the Bishops of the world, to make the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, promising to save it by this means. There are so many souls whom the justice of God condemns for sins committed against me, that I have come to ask reparation. Sacrifice yourself for this intention and pray.”^[142]

This vision and the words of Our lady were discussed with, and formally submitted to, Lucia’s superiors. They in turn, made sure the

message reached the appropriate authorities who could determine the appropriateness of alerting the Pope.

1935

SEPTEMBER 12 – DECEMBER 15

It seemed that the years had begun to tie up any loose ends in the wake of the Apparitions to the children, regardless of where those Apparitions took place. Jacinta had been promised that she would one day, after her death, return to Fatima and it appeared that the year 1935 would bring the fulfillment of that promise. The small casket carrying Jacinta's remains was exhumed from its original burial spot in a cemetery at Vila Nova de Ourem some fifteen and a half years later. On September 12, 1935, the casket was taken to the cemetery in Fatima where Jacinta could be reunited with her brother Francisco. Prior to her reburial, the casket was opened to the audible sound of many gasps from those present. To the amazement of many, the body, it seems, was found to be completely intact, a state referred to as uncorrupted. Various photographs were taken of the body, one of which was sent by Bishop Jose Alves Correia da Silva to Lucia. [\[143\]](#)

The photo was received by a thankful Lucia on November 17th and she immediately wrote a thank you note to the Bishop in which she recalled some very vivid memories of Jacinta. Upon reading her note, it occurred to Bishop Correia that Lucia had a great deal of information about her cousin that no one else knew and he worried that all that information might be forever lost if anything were to happen to her. Hoping to preserve Jacinta's memory, he sent word to Lucia requesting that she reduce to writing everything she could still remember about her. [\[144\]](#)



After suffering greatly, Jacinta Marto was taken to heaven by Our Lady on Friday February 20, 1920. Her body was buried in a cemetery in Ourem but was exhumed on September 12, 1935 for reburial in the same cemetery in Fatima in which Francisco's body lay. Though having been in the ground for over 15 years, her body was found to be incorrupt and giving off a fragrance of flowers.

Lucia received the message on December 15th and immediately began to pen a memoir on Jacinta as Bishop Correia had requested. In this memoir, Lucia wrote of Jacinta's life but was careful to not reveal any of the secrets shared by Our Lady with the children.^[145] The Bishop read the memoir with great interest and shared it with Fr. Fonseca. After reading Lucia's account of Jacinta, the vivid memories, and the extraordinarily detailed information that was contained within, Fr. Fonseca, wrote to the Bishop on November 7th noting that Lucia's "first memoir makes one think that there are further interesting details in the history of the Apparitions...which are not yet known. Consequently, he asked the Bishop to ask Lucia to write down everything she remembers about the Apparitions.

Bishop Jose concurred with Fr. Fonseca's request and "gave Lucia the necessary order." Lucia immediately replied to the Bishop that she had "begun today, for this is the Will of God." Just three weeks later, on November 21st, Lucia completed the 38-page manuscript, filled front and back with close handwriting, almost without corrections, as requested by the Bishop. This manuscript revealed much of the detail that had been missing about the angelic apparitions, her extraordinary blessings on the occasion of her First Communion, the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Apparition of June 1917, and much more.

In addressing her reluctance to share the information asked to be kept secret by Our Lady, she writes a note to God saying, “No longer will I savor the joy of sharing with You alone the secrets of Your love, but henceforth, others too, will sing the greatness of Your mercy... Behold the handmaid of the Lord! May He continue to make use of her, as He thinks best.”

1938 JANUARY 25 AND 26

On the night of January 25, 1938, Sister Lucia stood by the window in her room at the convent. She noticed a red glow, an ominous glow, that seemed to light the entire sky. Lucia was not the only one to see this light, however, as it was visible throughout Europe and Africa and in parts of America and Asia. The lights persisted and continued to light the sky the following night as well. It was explained scientifically as the lights of the aurora borealis despite the northern lights being a most unusual occurrence in Portugal.



Lucia dos Santos was only ten-years old when Our Lady told her that she would remain on earth well after the deaths of her cousins so that she could establish devotion in the world to Mary's Immaculate Heart. Sister Lucia's mission ended on February 13, 2005, less than two months shy of her 98th birthday.

Lucia knew better however, sensing immediately that she had just witnessed the fulfillment of Our Lady's prophecy of July 13, 1917 in which she promised *“When you see the night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.”* She made arrangement to see that the Pope was informed of her belief.

Pius XII was the Pontiff as World War II was officially begun on September 1, 1939 following the declarations of war by Britain and France on Germany for its invasion of Poland. However, the conflicts leading to this

war began perhaps as early as 1936 when Adolf Hitler of Germany ordered his troops into the Rhineland and culminated in March 1938 when Hitler overtook Austria and then six months later demanded the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia. These events, and the unknown light in the night sky that announced it, occurred during the reign of Pope Pius XI, just as Our Lady had foretold to Lucia and her cousins back in July 1917.^[146]

1942 - 1952

Pope Pius XII received word of Lucia's interpretation of the strange lights. Lucia had never really believed the lights to be the Northern Lights as was explained at the time and it is reasonable to suspect that she may have conveyed those thoughts to the Pope as well. Regardless, the Pope did consecrate the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1942 with a particular mention of Russia.^[147] Privately, Lucia doubted that such a general consecration fulfilled the very specific requirement of Our Lady as expressed in the vision. She demanded the Holy Father's consecration of Russia, commenting, "but it has not been done in the form indicated by Our Lady: I do not know whether Our Lady accepts it, done in this way, as complying with her promises."^[148] On January 2, 1944, Our Lady appeared to Sister Lucy yet again following Lucia's anguish at being asked to reduce to writing the Third Secret that was given her by Our Lady in July 1917. In granting permission to write the Third Secret, Our Lady asks it to be revealed to the world not later than 1960.

In a July 15, 1946 interview with Fr. William Thomas Walsh, Lucia made no secret of the fact that "Our Lady did not ask for the consecration of the world to her Immaculate Heart. What she demanded specifically was the consecration of Russia.... What Our Lady wants is that the Pope and all the bishops in the world shall consecrate Russia to Her Immaculate Heart on one special day. If this is done, she will convert Russia and there will be peace. If it is not done, the errors of Russia will spread throughout every country in the world." When asked, if "this means every country, without exception, will be overcome by communism," Lucia responded, "Yes."^[149]

PART V
FATIMA'S MESSAGE,
PROMISES AND SECRETS

THE MESSAGE

In 1917, the world appeared to be on a ruinous course culminated perhaps with the horrors of the very first World War ever experienced by earth's inhabitants. Hundreds of thousands lay dead from the violent fighting, a flu pandemic ravished much of the world and an assault on religion was undertaken by secular political influences that threatened to abolish all religion from the predominantly Catholic Country of Portugal, and perhaps beyond, within two generations.

It is within this backdrop that God chose to send a very special emissary to deliver a message of redemption to the world through three young shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal. "The message was a summons to conversion, faith, prayer, penance and hope."^[150] The Mother of God herself appeared with instructions for the children to pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world; to make sacrifices for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for offenses committed against God and Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. She also warned that people must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. Subsequent Apparitions called for a special devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart and the completion of the First Saturday Communions of reparation.

In the year 2000, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, speaking as the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, explained that unlike the "public revelation which came to completion in Christ, as enunciated in the New Testament," the "private revelation" of Mary to the children of Fatima has three elements. First, nothing of the message is contrary to faith or morals; second, public disclosure is not illegal; and, third, "the faithful are under no obligation to accept the help offered in the message. Cardinal Ratzinger confirmed his statement after his election as Pope Benedict XVI, the 266th Pope of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church has long held that it is not the role of such "private revelations" to "improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history."^[151]

THE PROMISES

As discussed, the Mother of God not only called the three

shepherds of Fatima to prayer, sacrifice and devotions to Her Immaculate Heart, but She provided instruction on how to achieve this and gave a promise of what would happen if people of all stripes heeded her call. For example, if you pray the Rosary every day adding at the end of each decade the words, *‘Oh my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are in most need,’* then world peace will be achieved.

Likewise, if you make many sacrifices, saying with each sacrifice, *“Oh Jesus, it is for love of you, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary,”* that I sacrifice, then God will stop being offended, and thus will recant his promised outbreak of a more terrible war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.

Our Lady also promised to *“come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays.* She again promised what would happen if these requests were met with compliance.

“If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.

Finally, On December 10, 1925, Our Lady fulfilled this promise. She appeared in a vision to Lucia to ask for the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart and to provide very explicit instruction of how to achieve this.

“Look my daughter, at my heart encircled with thorns, with which ungrateful men wound it every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. Give me consolation, you at least; and announce for me that I promise to assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all who on the first Saturday of five consecutive months

confess, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for fifteen minutes meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the purpose of making reparation to me.”

Learning from the Holy Mother of God Herself what we must do on five consecutive Saturdays does not necessarily satisfy the curiosity as to why Our Lady would ask for this devotion. Jesus himself provided those reasons to Lucia in two separate, 1930 revelations, one occurring on the evening of May 29th and the other on the evening of May 30th. Lucia sent this information to Fr. Jose Bernardo Gonzalves in a letter on June 12, 1930.

“My daughter,” the Lord said to Lucia, “the motive is simple: there are five ways in which people offend me, and blaspheme against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

- 1. The blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception,*
- 2. Against Her virginity,*
- 3. Against the divine maternity, refusing at the same time to accept her as the Mother of all mankind,*
- 4. Those who try publicly to implant in the children’s hearts, indifference, contempt and even hate against this Immaculate Mother, and*
- 5. Those who insult her directly in her sacred images.”*^[152]

So, there it is! The Mother of Jesus has asked for the completion of five First Saturday devotions to her Immaculate Heart and Jesus has provided the motivation for this requirement. The final piece was provided by Our Lady. That is the detailed instruction for completion of the First Saturdays. Our Lady required that the First Saturdays contain six distinct elements that are relatively self-explanatory. They are:

- 1. Confessing one’s sins to a priest,*
- 2. Receiving Holy Communion in a state of grace,*
- 3. Praying five decades of the Rosary,*
- 4. Meditating for fifteen minutes on one or more of the Mysteries of the Rosary,*

5. Doing these things in the spirit of Reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and,
6. Observing these practices on the First Saturday of five consecutive months.

The Mother of God has made one additional promise regarding this devotion. For those who faithfully and fervently complete the Five First Saturdays devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart, Our Lady will provide all the graces necessary for that person to attain salvation.

THE SECRETS

Included in the delivery of the primary message that Our Lady provided to the children of Fatima were three visions that reinforced that message. Our Lady asked the children to refrain from speaking of these secrets, saying *"Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him."* This is a request that the children took very seriously. Even after being: kidnapped by the government officials; held captive to prevent them from going to the Cova da Iria at the appointed time of the August Apparition; jailed with adult criminals; threatened with death by being slowly lowered into a vat of boiling oil; separated from each other and told that each had been tortured and killed in that way, the children still faithfully honored Our Lady's request of secrecy.

So how is it then that the secrets were revealed? Lucia revealed the first two secrets in her August 1941 Memoir, only with the greatest reluctance, after much prayer, and in total obedience to a direct order of the Bishop. In fact, she was granted permission to do so by Our Lady in an Apparition on December 17, 1927. Yet the third secret, she guarded even more closely. It was in 1943, when Lucia fell seriously ill with influenza and pleurisy, that Bishop Silva of Leiria visited her and suggested she write the third secret down to ensure its survival in the event of her death. At the time Lucia was a nun in the Carmelite Order. "Carmelites obedience requires that orders from superiors be regarded as coming directly from God." This presented a dilemma for Lucia. Which is of greater weight, a direct request of secrecy given by Our Lady or the indirect order from God's representative that the secret be disclosed. As she pondered the quandary, "Bishop Silva sent Lucia a letter containing a

direct order to record the secret.” On January 3, 1944, following anguished prayer and permission from Our Lady granted in a vision the night prior, Lucia wrote the third secret on a piece of paper and placed it in an envelope that she sealed and secured. On the outside of the envelope, as instructed by Our Lady in Lucia’s vision, she wrote that the letter was to be opened and read prior to 1960. In June 1944, that envelope was delivered to Bishop Silva who kept it in his possession until 1957, at which time it was delivered to the Vatican.

The envelope was opened by the Pope in 1960, but the third secret that was contained within it was not made public until Cardinal Angelo Sodano announced on May 13, 2000, that it would be released. A text of the third secret was issued by the Vatican on June 26, 2000.

So, what are these secrets that Our Lady shared with Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta on July 13, 1917? The first two secrets have been described previously as Lucia recounted them for the world to see in her Remembrances. They are:

THE FIRST SECRET THE VISION OF HELL:

“Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say many times, especially whenever you make some sacrifice: Oh Jesus, it is for love of you, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

As she spoke these words, Our Lady stretched out her hands, as before, emulating rays of light that seemed to penetrate directly into the earth, exposing to the children a sea of fire. “Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair.”

The vision horrified the children and made them tremble with fear causing Lucia to scream. “The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. Terrified and as if to plead for succor,” the children looked up at the Lady, who so kindly, and ever so sadly, said to

them, “You have seen Hell where the souls of poor sinners go.”^[153]

THE SECOND SECRET

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SAVING SOULS FROM HELL AND RECONVERTING THE WORLD TO CHRISTIANITY

To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end, but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI. When you see the night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father. To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world. Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him. When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery, ‘Oh my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are in most need.’”^[154]

THE THIRD SECRET

THE CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

The text of the letter in which Lucia revealed the third secret is reprinted here in its entirety as released by the Vatican on June 26, 2000.

“The third part of the secret revealed at the Cova da Iria-Fatima, on 13 July 1917.

I write in obedience to you, my God, who command me to do so through his Excellency the Bishop of Leiria and through your Most Holy Mother and mine.

After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendor that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’ And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father’. Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and the various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.”

Tuy-3-1-1944

PART VI
THE CONTROVERSY

1981

MAY 13

Pope John Paul II, arguably the most charismatic Pope of modern times, stepped into his specially-made, white, open-top Jeep, better known as the Pope-mobile, at about 4:50 in the afternoon of May 13, 1981. He was just about to start his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square. The Jeep began its slow trek around the elliptical-shaped plaza, stopping periodically to allow Pope John Paul to reach out from the vehicle to shake hands and to pick up and kiss small children, much to the delight of their enthusiastic parents.

At about 5:19 PM, the Pope's vehicle came to a stop just southwest of the Basilica steps. Twenty three-year old Mehmet Ali Agca, a Turkish man with boyish good looks, was among the thousands in the festive crowd, but Agca offered no child for the Pope to kiss, nor did he come to shake hands with the Pontiff. Rather, he reached into his pocket, took a 9mm Browning handgun firmly in his grasp, removed it from his pocket and fired six shots in the direction of John Paul from a distance of only a few yards. Four of those bullets found the intended target. Two bullets hit the Pope in the abdomen, narrowly missing his vital organs, a third hit him in his left arm and the fourth in his left hand. The other two bullets missed the Pope, but did injure two people. Ann Odre, a sixty-year-old American was struck in the chest while a twenty-one-year-old Jamaican woman, Rose Hill, was hit in the arm. "John Paul clutched his chest and slumped into the arms of his aids as a bright red stain slowly extended across his white cassock."^[155] Agca was immediately grabbed by bystanders who knocked the weapon out of his hand and detained him until the police arrived to arrest him. As he was led away, Agca repeated several times, "I couldn't care less about life. As if to emphasize the point, police found in his pocket a note that read, "I, Agca, have killed the Pope so that the world may know of the thousands of victims of imperialism."^[156]

The Pope, meanwhile, was taken to Gemelli Hospital in Rome where he would undergo five and a half hours of surgery that saved his life. At least one of the bullets was successfully removed from the Pontiff's abdomen during the surgery.

Agca had killed before. He was jailed in 1979 for the high-profile

murder of Abdi Ipekci, a newspaper editor who authored articles exposing far-right groups from Turkey, but escaped from prison by slipping into a prison guard's uniform and walking out. Shortly after his escape, the Turkish paper Milliyet published a letter that Agca had submitted in which he threatened to kill the Pope for being an "agent of Russian and U.S. imperialism."

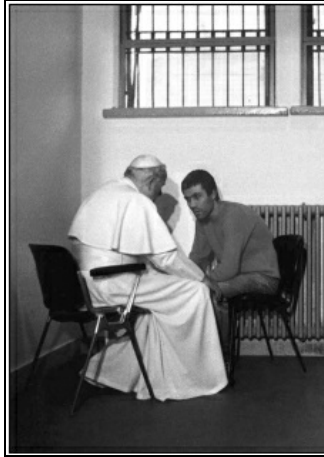
The ease with which Agca escaped from prison has led to speculation that he was part of a widespread conspiracy but the exact reason why the Pope was targeted remains unclear. What is clear is that Pope John Paul II believed he owed his survival to the direct intervention of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for his thoughts and many of his actions following the attempt on his life were very much occupied by the events of Fatima.

On May 13, 1982, one year after the assassination attempt in St. Peter's Square and the 65th anniversary of the first apparition of Our Lady to the children, Pope John Paul II travelled to Fatima, where he met Sr. Lucia. The Holy Father visited the various sites associated with the Apparitions. Then, "On the occasion of a visit to Rome by the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, the Pope decided to give him the bullet which had remained in the jeep after the assassination attempt, so that it might be kept in the shrine. By the Bishop's decision, the bullet was later set in the crown of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima."^[157] In December of 1983, Pope John Paul II visited Agca in his jail cell to forgive him for his transgression. He had, in fact, expressed his forgiveness of the would-be assassin shortly after the shooting, but visited Agca to provide the world an example of the type of absolute forgiveness to which we are all called.

In 1984, the grateful Pope requested that the statue of Our Lady from Fatima's Capelinha, the one presented by Gilberto Fernandes dos Santos, from Torres Novas and contained in the "Little Chapel" that was built in 1922 on the site of the holm-oak tree, be sent to Rome where in collegial union with the Bishops of the Church, he specifically consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on March 25, 1984, the feast of the Annunciation. He repeated the consecration on October 8, 2000 after again having requested that the statue be sent to Rome.^[158]

In 2000, on the 83rd anniversary of the first Apparition of Our Lady to the three shepherds of Fatima, Pope John Paul II beatified Francisco and Jacinta Marto. The celebration of beatification was attended by more than 700,000 people and the children's cause for canonization was placed under

consideration, a cause that would be realized on May 13, 2017 when Pope Francis made the two children saints on the 100th anniversary of the Apparition.



Despite having been sentenced to life in prison just two months after the shooting, the jail cell meeting between Pope John Paul II and Agca in which the Pope offered his forgiveness, and a subsequent clemency granted by the Italian President, provided Agca with his freedom once more. In 2010, Agca was released from his prison cell and made a free man. Pope John Paul II would not live to see Agca's release, however, as the Pontiff died in 2005, but the forgiveness granted by the leader of 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide evidently touched the would-be assassin. In December of 2014, Agca visited the Vatican one more time, but this time, it was not with the intention of making a political statement, but rather to lay flowers at the grave of the Pope he tried to kill some thirty-three years earlier.

The failed assassination of Pope John Paul II has unwittingly become the source of what is perhaps the only controversy (at least in the hearts of the faithful) regarding the events of Our Lady's appearance over one hundred years ago. The Catholic Church contends that the 1981 attempted assassination is the fulfillment of the third secret revealed to the children by the Mother of God, while some of the faithful believe there has been a Vatican cover-up of future events so horrific that disclosure will create widespread panic and pandemonium.

To understand the source and extent of the controversy, it may prove worthwhile to review the events related to the Third Secret as they unfolded. A chronological sequence has been prepared by a 1978 group known as the Fatima Center, "a grass roots association of Catholic priests and lay people whose mission is," according to its website, "to make known the full Message of Our Lady of Fatima, and promote devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."^[159]

Father Nicholas Gruner, the organization's director until he fell victim to a sudden heart attack while working in his Fatima Center office in Ontario on the night of April 29, 2015, dedicated his life to making the Message of Our Lady of Fatima known, understood, appreciated, and obeyed. His insistence that there is an organized Vatican cover-up of the Third Secret has understandably created some distance between his organization and the Church. Church officials have suspended Fr. Gruner from the priesthood. Fr. Gruner contended that his suspension was not done legally and was therefore devoid of merit. To appropriately represent all that Fr. Gruner has claimed without subjective interpretation or bias, the chronology presented by The Fatima Center is reprinted here verbatim.

- **“1917, July 13,** – Our Lady of Fatima gives a secret in three parts to the three shepherd children.
- **1941** – Sister Lucia reveals the first two parts of the Secret in her Memoirs, first on August 31st in her Third Memoir and then again on December 8 in her Fourth Memoir.
- **1943, October** – The Bishop of Fatima gives Sister Lucy a formal, written order to write down the Third Secret. Sister Lucy tries to obey immediately, but for over two months is mysteriously unable to commit the Third Secret to paper.
- **1944, January 2,** – Our Lady appears to Sister Lucy and bids her to write down the Third Secret. Our Lady asks it to be revealed to the world not later than 1960. When later asked why the people had to wait for the Third Secret to be revealed in 1960, Sister Lucy states. “Because the Blessed Virgin wishes it so,” and “It [the Third Secret] will be clearer then.” The Third Secret is later delivered in person by Sister Lucy to her confessor bishop who in turn delivers it to the Bishop of Fatima, Jose da Silva, on June 17.
- **1944, January 3,** – A photograph of Bishop da Silva posing in front of the 25-line text of the Third Secret, which is enclosed in the bishop's own outer envelope, appears in *Life* magazine.

- **1952, September** – Austrian Jesuit Father Joseph Schweigl, sent by Pope Pius XII to interrogate Sister Lucy about the Third Secret, states that the Secret is in two parts. He later confides to one of his colleagues, “I cannot reveal anything of what I learned at Fatima concerning the Third Secret, but I can say that it has two parts: *one concerns the Pope*. The other, logically – although I must say nothing – would have to be the continuation of the words: *In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved.*”
- **1957, March** – Bishop John Vernancio holds up to a strong light the outer envelope of Bishop da Silva (photographed for *Life* magazine in 1949) containing an inner envelope of Sister Lucy, inside of which he sees the paper upon which is written the Third Secret. He carefully notes that the Secret is *about 25 lines long and is written on a single sheet of paper with $\frac{3}{4}$ centimeter margins* on both sides. On April 16, the Third Secret is received in the Vatican and placed in a safe in the papal apartments.
- **1957, December 26** – In an allusion to the contents of the Third Secret, Sister Lucy tells Fr. Fuentes, Postulator of the Cause for Beatification of Jacinta and Francisco Marto, of many nations disappearing from the face of the earth, about the crisis in the priesthood, and of many souls going to hell as a result of ignoring Our Lady of Fatima’s Message.
- **1958, October** – The well-known magazine *Paris-Match* publishes a photo of the wooden safe in Pope Pius XII’s apartment in which was kept the Third Secret of Fatima.
- **1959, August 17** – Pope John XXIII reads the 25-line text of the Third Secret which was taken from the papal apartment and then has his personal secretary, Msgr. Loris Capovilla, write on the envelope, “I leave it to others to comment or decide.”
- **1960, February 8** – As the world anxiously awaits the full revelation of the Third Secret, the Vatican issues an anonymous press release stating that the Third Secret would not be disclosed

and “would probably remain, forever, under absolute seal.” Pope John XXIII reads the 62-line text of the Third Secret that same year.

- **1963, June 27** – Pope Paul VI reads the text of the Third Secret kept in the papal apartment after the Substitute Secretary of State telephones Msgr. Capovilla, personal secretary of Pope John XXIII, to inquire as to where to find it. Capovilla testifies to this fact in his certified note of May 17, 1967. It is this text that is later identified by Cardinal Ottaviani as being 25-lines long.
- **1965, March 27** – Pope Paul VI reads the other text of the Third Secret – the one that is 62-lines long. Cardinal Bertone claims that Paul VI read the Third Secret for the first time on this date.
- **1967, May 13** – Sister Lucy meets Pope Paul VI in Fatima and asks him to release the Third Secret, but he refuses.
- **1978, October 16** – Pope John Paul II is elected Pope and reads a text of the Third Secret within days of his election, according to a statement to Associated Press in May 2000 by his spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls. The statement by Navarro-Valls is contradicted by Msgr. Bertone when he claimed in June 2000 that the Pope first read the Third Secret on July 18, 1981.
- **1981, July 18** – Pope John Paul II reads the other text of the Third Secret shortly after the assassination attempt on his life in May. According to Cardinal Bertone, the Pope read for the first time the 62-line text of the Third Secret that is kept in the Holy Offices archives.
- **1984, September 10** – Bishop Alberto Cosme do Amaral, the Bishop of Fatima, declares during a question and answer session in the *aula magna* of the Technical University of Vienna, Austria, “It’s [The Third Secret’s] content concerns only our faith. To identify the Secret with catastrophic announcements or with a nuclear holocaust is to deform the meaning of the message. The loss of faith of a continent is worse than the

annihilation of a nation; and it is true that faith is continually diminishing in Europe.”

- **1984, November 11** – *Jesus* magazine publishes an interview with Cardinal Ratzinger. The interview is entitled “Here is Why the Faith is in Crisis,” and is published with the Cardinal’s explicit permission. Cardinal Ratzinger reveals that he has read the Third Secret and that the Secret refers to “dangers threatening the faith and the life of the Christian and therefore (the life) of the world.” Cardinal Ratzinger says in the same interview that the Secret also refers to “the importance of the *Novissimi* [the Last Times]”, “the absolute importance of history”, and that “the things contained in this ‘Third Secret’ correspond to what has been announced in Scripture and has been said again and again in many other Marian apparitions, first of all that of Fatima...”
- **1995** – In a personal communication to Professor Baumgartner in Salzburg, Austria, Cardinal Mario Luigi Ciappi – the personal theologian of John Paul II (and of the four popes before him) – reveals that, “In the Third Secret it is foretold, among other things, that the great apostasy [defined as an act of refusing to continue to follow, obey, or recognize a religious faith or the abandonment of a previous loyalty] in the Church will begin at the top.”
- **1998** – Howard Dee, former Philippine ambassador to the Vatican, said in an interview with *Inside the Vatican* magazine that “Bishop Ito [the local bishop of Akita, now deceased] was certain Akita was an extension of Fatima, and *Cardinal Ratzinger personally confirmed to me that these two messages, of Fatima and Akita, are essentially the same.*”

At Akita on October 13, 1973, Our Lady said there would be a worldwide chastisement for sins in which a great part of humanity would be killed and that those who survive would envy the dead.

- **2000, June 26** – At a press conference, Archbishop Bertone publishes the 62-line text which he claims is the entire Third

Secret and claims it refers to the 1981 assassination attempt of John Paul II. The 62-line text describes a vision in which the Pope (a “Bishop dressed in White”) *is killed* by a band of soldiers. This text, containing *none* of the elements described by Cardinal Ratzinger in his 1984 interview in Jesus magazine, is obviously incomplete.

- **2001, May 16** – Reflecting the growing skepticism of millions of Catholics, Mother Angelica states on her live television show that she does not believe the Vatican has revealed the entirety of the Third Secret. “Mother Angelica Live” as a live program is taken off the air by December.
- **2001, October 25** – Cardinal Ratzinger admits to a “*destabilizing [of] the internal equilibrium of the Roman Curia*” due to reports (following the September 11th terrorist attack on New York and the invasion of Afghanistan) of a recent letter from Sister Lucy to the Pope concerning the Third Secret and dangers to the world and the person of the Pope.
- **2001, November 17** – Archbishop Bertone (later to become Cardinal Bertone, Vatican Secretary of State) travels from Rome to Coimbra to interview Sister Lucy about the Third Secret and claims the interview went on for two hours, but the communique published by Bertone contains *only 44 words* alleged to be from the mouth of Sister Lucy concerning the matters of the Third Secret and the Consecration of Russia controversies.
- **2005, February 13** – Sister Lucy dies at the age of 97 in her convent in Coimbra, Portugal.
- **2006, November 22** – Renowned Italian Catholic commentator and journalist Antonio Socci publishes his book, *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, which accuses Cardinal Bertone of covering up the complete Third Secret. The book cites the testimony of Archbishop Loris F. Capovilla in July 2006, to Catholic researcher Solideo Paolini, that there are two different texts and two different envelopes pertaining to the Third Secret, that one of

the envelopes and its contents – the “Capovilla envelope” – was kept in the papal apartment, not in the archives of the former Holy Office where the text of the version was lodged, and that Paul VI read its contents on June 27, 1963, two years before the Bertone “official account”, which claims that Pope Paul VI first read the text of the Third Secret on March 27, 1965. The “Capovilla envelope” and text have never been produced.

- **2007, May 10** – Attempting to discredit Socci, Cardinal Bertone publishes his own book, *The Last Visionary of Fatima*, written in the form of an interview by a Vatican affairs reporter, Giuseppe De Carli, who poses no challenging questions but rather de facto avoids all the issues, including Msgr. Capovilla’s explosive testimony. In response, on May 12 Socci proclaims and explains publicly (in his weekly column in the Italian Journal *Libero*) that his own book has been vindicated by the Cardinal’s complete failure to answer it, which Socci calls a disturbing development as it means that there is indeed an ongoing cover-up on the part of the Vatican regarding the Third Secret.
- **2007, May 31** – Cardinal Bertone appears by remote live feed on the very popular Italian TV talk show *Porta a Porta* to again respond to Socci’s book. During this telecast Bertone displays not only the text of the version but also two separate, sealed envelopes prepared by Sister Lucy, each bearing the explicit statement in Sister Lucy’s own handwriting that “By express order of Our Lady, this envelope can be opened in 1960 only by the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon or the Bishop of Leiria.”

The two sealed envelopes, and other revelations by Cardinal Bertone during the telecast, further confirm the existence of two texts comprising the Third Secret in its entirety. Further, the “express order of Our Lady” noted on the envelopes flatly contradicts Cardinal Bertone’s earlier repeated representations (only said *after* Sr. Lucy’s death in 2005) that Sister Lucy “confessed” to him in private, unrecorded conversations that the Virgin has never given any such order.

- **2007, June 2** – Following the telecast, from which Socci has been excluded, Socci publishes his response in *Libero*. He declares that Bertone has not only failed to “give even one answer” to Socci’s book, but “On the contrary, he did more: He offered proof that I am right” and “that as a matter of fact the explosive part of the ‘Third Secret of Fatima’ exists yet is well hidden...”
- **2007, September 21** – Bertone stages a second television appearance for himself, this time on the Telepace network, to officially launch his own book which had been published in May and also to try yet again to discredit Socci’s book for the third time. The press are invited to attend. Socci, as a journalist, appears at the telecast location to question Cardinal Bertone. He acts in a proper way but is forcibly removed from the premises by security guards. During the telecast Bertone once again avoids any discussion of the issues. Instead, he presents a heavily-edited videotape of an interview of Archbishop Capovilla conducted by Giuseppe De Carli, a partisan of Cardinal Bertone, in which the Archbishop not only fails to deny the testimony he gave to Paolini (whose name is never mentioned) about the “Capovilla envelope,” but rather fully confirms its existence and location in the papal apartment, and the reading of its contents by Paul VI in 1963, not 1965 as the Bertone “official account” had claimed.
- **2007, September 22** – The Italian newspaper *Il Giornale* reports that before the guards removed Socci from the location of the telecast of September 21, he was able to play for the assembled journalists an audiotape of Capovilla’s statements to Paolini during a meeting on June 21, 2007. On the tape Capovilla is heard to state: “Besides the four pages [of the vision of the bishop dressed in white] there was also something else, an attachment, yes.” As the reporter from *Il Giornale* concludes, Capovilla’s statement “would confirm the thesis of the existence of a second sheet with the interpretation of the Secret” – namely, the words of the Virgin following the “etc.”

- **2007, September 23** – Socci again responds to Cardinal Bertone in his column in *Libero*. Socci again calmly demonstrates that Cardinal Bertone is hiding a major part of the Third Secret.
- **2008, January 25** – Christopher A. Ferrara’s book, *The Secret Still Hidden*, goes to press; 100,000 copies are printed. In this book, the author gives the history of the Third Secret up to that time. He proves beyond any reasonable doubt that there is a second text, still hidden by the Vatican bureaucrats, which contains the words of Our Lady which follow “In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved, etc.” He demonstrates his proof using the facts and details provided by both Socci and Bertone. The Italian version of his book is sent to 12,000 Italian priests in June 2008. Cardinal Bertone is sent a copy of Ferrara’s book by August 2008 and Bertone acknowledges receipt of the book but refuses to answer the substance of any of Ferrara’s arguments.
- **2010, May 4** – Vatican journalist Giuseppe De Carli, co-author with Cardinal Bertone of *The Last Visionary of Fatima* (re-issued in 2010 under the new title, *The Last Secret of Fatima*), and an apologist for Cardinal Bertone’s now discredited explanations of the Third Secret, admits to the *Fatima Challenge* Conference before the TV cameras that “...they could have tricked me.”
- **2010, May 11** – Pope Benedict XVI, on his pilgrimage to Portugal in May, stunned the press and the Catholic world by saying that the Third Secret of Fatima tells us that “not only from the outside come the attacks against the Pope and the Church, but the sufferings of the Church come from right inside the Church, from the sin that resides inside the Church...we see this today really in a terrifying way: the greatest persecution against the Church doesn’t come from its enemies outside, but starts from the sins within the Church.”
- **2010, May 13** – Before 500,000 pilgrims, the Pope proclaimed (in reference to the Third Secret): “Whoever thinks that the prophetic mission of Fatima is concluded deceives himself.”

- **2010, July 13** – Giuseppe De Carli dies on the 93rd anniversary of the imparting of the Third Secret by Our Lady of Fatima to the three shepherd children.
- **2011, May 11** – Christopher Ferrara publishes the updated 2nd edition of the Italian version of *The Secret Still Hidden*. Using De Carli's statement from the year before and referring to the 2nd edition of Bertone's book, he further proves that Bertone is still hiding a major part of the Third Secret.
- **2011, July – August** – Christopher Ferrara's book, *The Secret Still Hidden*, receives an endorsement in the August-September issue of the prestigious *Inside the Vatican* magazine. There the editor Robert Moynihan relates a recent conversation with the late Archbishop Pietro Sambì, who died in July. Archbishop Sambì was Papal Nuncio to the United States and thus a key attaché of the Vatican Secretariat of State under Cardinal Bertone. The report of Moynihan, in part, goes as follows:

“We [Sambì and Moynihan] were discussing the Third Secret of Fatima, the allegations that the Vatican has not published the entire text of the Third Secret as revealed to Sister Lucia, and the response of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican Secretary of State, in a book where Bertone states that there is nothing more to be revealed.

“Archbishop Sambì said, ‘Excuse me.’ He got up, went out of the room, and came back with a book. ‘Here,’ he said. ‘Do you know this book? You should read it.’ It was Christopher Ferrara's *The Secret Still Hidden*. ‘Wait,’ I said. ‘You are the Pope's representative in the US, and you are urging me to read a book that questions what the Secretary of State wrote?’

Sambì replied: ‘All I am saying is that there are interesting things worth reading in this book. And in

the end, we are all after the truth, aren't we? The truth is the important thing..."

The Fatima Center further notes that the sole surviving visionary herself was silenced by the Vatican when in 1960 it "imposed some very strict conditions of isolation on Sister Lucy, the very same year that the Third Secret was to be revealed to the world...and wasn't." In fact, from that time, and right up until the hour of her death, Sister Lucia was "forbidden to speak about Fatima without direct permission from the Holy See," permission that was never granted.

Prior to the order of silence, however, Sister Lucia spoke to Father Augustine Fuentes. In a conversation took place in 1957, Sister Lucia said,

"The devil is about to wage a decisive battle with the Blessed Virgin, as he knows what it is that offends God the most, and which in a short space of time will gain for him the greatest number of souls. Thus, the devil does everything to overcome souls consecrated to God, because in this way he will succeed in leaving the souls of the faithful abandoned by their leaders, thereby the more easily will he seize them."

Though not able to speak of the Third Secret openly after 1960, Sister Lucia wrote of it in 1969 to one of her priest-nephews, saying, "do not let yourself be deceived." In 1970 Lucia wrote to Mother Martins, a former companion with the Dorothean Sisters, noting:

"It is painful to see such a great disorientation in so many who occupy places of responsibility...the devil has succeeded in infiltrating evil under cover of good, and the blind are beginning to guide others, as the Lord tells us in His Gospel, **and souls are letting themselves be deceived.**"

Clearly, in 1957 Sister Lucia recognized the devil's attempts to wage battle and by 1971 had recognized his early successes. In fact, The Fatima Center notes that many publications, both secular and Catholic, have expressed, not only concern, but skepticism about the Vatican's transparency on this issue. According to Fr. Gruner, even the Washington Post, a secular publication of the United States free press, expressed doubts in a July 1, 2000 edition, about the Catholic Church's official interpretation of the Third Secret. "There is every reason to believe," Gruner contends, "that the Vatican is hiding a text of the Third Secret – the words of Our Lady which would

explain how the Pope in the vision comes to be executed by soldiers outside a ruined city filled with corpses – which, when revealed in full, has the power to bring about the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

On May 12, 1982, Fr. Gruner explains, Sister Lucia expressed her concerns in a letter to Pope John Paul II, writing,

“The third part of the secret refers to Our Lady’s words: If not [Russia] will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions against the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated.

The third part of the secret, that you are so anxious to know, is a symbolic revelation, referring to this part of the Message, conditioned by whether we accept or not what the Message itself asks of us: If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not she will spread her errors throughout the world, etc.

Since we did not heed this appeal of the Message, we see that it has been fulfilled, Russia has invaded the world with her errors *and if we have not yet seen the complete fulfillment of the final part of this prophecy, we are going towards it with great strides...* If we do not reject the path of sin, hatred, revenge, injustice, violations of the rights of the human person, immorality and violence, etc.

And let us not say that it is God who is punishing us in this way; on the contrary, it is people themselves who are preparing their own punishment. In his kindness God warns us and calls us to the right path, while respecting the freedom he has given us; hence people are responsible.”

The Fatima Center notes the importance of Sister Lucia’s failure to reference the Pontiff’s assassination attempt as the fulfillment of the Third Secret though it had occurred only a year prior. In fact, she specifically writes that “we are going towards it [the fulfillment of the final part of the prophesy] with great strides.” The very next day, Pope John Paul was to visit Fatima to consecrate the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, yet, it is not the consecration, but rather the annihilation of nations with which Sister Lucia expressed concern.

The Bishop of Fatima, Alberto Cosme do Amaral, addressed a session at the Technical University of Vienna, Austria on September 10, 1984 about the Third Secret of Fatima. His comments were later published in the *Mensagem de Fatima* as follows:

“The Secret of Fatima speaks neither of atomic bombs, nor nuclear warheads, nor Pershing missiles, nor SS-20s. Its content concerns only our faith. To identify the Secret with catastrophic announcements or with a nuclear holocaust is to deform the meaning of the message. The loss of faith of a continent is worse than the annihilation of a nation; and it is true that faith is continually diminishing in Europe.”^[160]

Shortly after these remarks were made, the Bishop was pressured to withdraw them, which he compliantly did. However, in 1995, after his retirement, he reaffirmed his Vienna comments in a public interview adding, “Before I asserted in Vienna [in 1984] that the Third Secret concerned only our Faith and the loss of Faith, I had consulted Sister Lucy and first obtained her approval.”^[161]

Then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was interviewed by *Jesus* magazine, a publication of the Pauline Sisters, on November 11, 1984. During the interview, Ratzinger acknowledged that the Third Secret contains “religious prophesy” which cannot be revealed “to prevent [its] being mistaken for a quest for the sensational.” Yet, on June 26, 2000, Ratzinger noted that the “Third Secret refers only to events which had already happened (culminating in the attempted assassination of the Pope in 1981) and contains no prophecy concerning the future.” He went on to say that “the Third Secret could be the result of Sister Lucy’s imagination alone.” The dichotomy of those two statements add to the confusion.^[162] Cardinal Ratzinger, just two years later, would become Pope Benedict XVI, the 265th leader of the Catholic church.

It is important to note that Fr. Gruner was censured by the Catholic Church for his failure to abide by an order of “his legitimate ecclesiastical superior to undertake some action.” Following a warning that “failure to do so would result in his suspension a divinis...he did not undertake the action required of him and subsequently his competent ecclesiastical superior followed through with the threatened censure.” Fr. Gruner was ordered, in

part, to cease his work and “return to his diocese of incardination” in Avellino, Italy, ^[163] an order with which he had failed to comply at the time of his death.

Fr. Andrew Apostoli, C.F.R., author of *Fatima For Today: The Urgent Marian Message of Hope*, disputes those like Fr. Gruner, whose opinion clearly differs from the official view of the Church regarding the interpretation of the Third Secret. In his book, Apostoli addresses the dissenters by listing the objections to two distinct but related controversies: the controversy over the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the controversy over the Third Secret. He responds to each objection with an explanation representative of the position of the Catholic Church. The focus here is to the responses related to objections regarding the controversy over the Third Secret. As was the case with Fr. Gruner’s timeline, Fr. Apostoli’s listing of objections and responses to the objections regarding this controversy is presented here in its entirety:

“Objection: The original Third Secret was written on one sheet of paper.

Many clerics who were familiar with the original text, including bishops who worked with popes John XXIII and Paul VI, said that the Third Secret was written on a single sheet of paper. (e.g., Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, who read the Third Secret with Pope John XXIII.)

The controversy came about when on June 26, 2000, the Vatican released a copy of Sister Lucia’s handwritten text in a four-page format. Though there are several possible ways a single sheet of paper can be turned into more than one page (written on both sides, folded and written on multiple sides, etc.) or copied onto more than one page, some critics said that the Vatican copy could not have been made from the authentic text and that some other document exists that contains the real Third Secret.

The Vatican copy of Sister Lucia’s handwritten manuscript appears in the document *The Message of Fatima* prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In the introduction, the secretary of the Congregation at the time, Archbishop Bertone, stated: ‘There is only one manuscript which is here reproduced photostatically,’ Sister Lucia herself confirmed the validity of the Vatican text. Archbishop Bertone and Bishop Seraphim de Sousa of Leiria met with Sister Lucia at her Carmelite convent in Coimbra, Portugal, on April 27, 2000. The Archbishop presented two envelopes to Sister Lucia. The first or outer envelope contained the second

envelope, which held the Third Secret. Touching it with her fingers, Sister Lucia said, 'This is my letter.' Then, while reading it, she said, 'This is my writing.' When asked if this document was the one and only Third Secret, Sister Lucia answered, 'Yes, this is the Third Secret, and I never wrote any other.'

We have additional proof from Sister Lucia that the photocopy of the Third Secret was authentic. She met again with Archbishop Bertone on November 17, 2001. A communique about that meeting carried this most important point:

With reference to the third part of the secret of Fatima, [Sister Lucia] affirmed that she had attentively read and meditated upon the booklet published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [The Message of Fatima] and confirmed everything that was written there. To whoever imagines some part of the secret has been hidden, she replied, 'everything has been published; no secret remains.' To those who speak and write of new revelations, she said: 'There is no truth in this. If I had received new revelations, I would have told no one, but I would have communicated them directly to the Holy Father.'

Objection: The text of the Third Secret released by the Vatican contains no words attributed to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The message of the Third Secret was not conveyed in words by our Lady, but in the various visions the children saw. Our Lady spoke simply by her actions, as when she prevented the fire from the flaming sword of the angel from touching the earth and consuming it. Archbishop Bertone explained:

The part of the text where the Virgin speaks in the first person wasn't censored, for the simple reason that it never existed. The text those people talk about just doesn't exist. I am not toeing some party line here. I'm basing my statement on Sister Lucia's own direct confirmation that the Third Secret is none other than the text that was published in the year 2000.

Objection: The Vatican's copy of the Third Secret contains no information about a nuclear holocaust, a great apostasy, or the satanic infiltration of the Catholic Church.

This objection is largely the result of the disappointment that some people felt when the Third Secret was finally revealed. Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) predicted this disappointment. 'A careful reading

of the [Third Secret]', he wrote, 'will probably prove disappointing or surprising after all the speculation it has stirred. No great mystery is revealed; nor is the future unveiled.'

The years of waiting for the revelation of the Third Secret combined with the discretion of the Vatican built up in many people's minds the idea that the Third Secret predicted some catastrophe, like a nuclear war, a world-wide natural disaster or a great tribulation within the Church. Some people even developed a 'conspiracy mentality', in which they assumed the faithful were not being told the truth about what was going to happen in the Church and in the world. Some critics have accused Vatican officials of publishing a fraudulent Third Secret or of withholding important information. The problem here is that no one has ever seen any other Third Secret of Fatima than the one that has already been released to the public. The burden of proof lies with the critics. They must produce another document or at least reliable witnesses who have seen and read it. At this point, none have come forward.

There is one final authority who should be quoted. He is Archbishop Loris Capovilla, who once served as private secretary to Pope John XXIII. He had read the Third Secret along with Pope John XXIII and actually held the manuscript in his hands. Certain people have claimed that he had said there were 'two texts' of the Third Secret. However, Archbishop Capovilla made the following clear and definitive statement:

There are not two truths from Fatima, nor is there any fourth secret. The text which I read in 1959 is the same that was distributed by the Vatican...I have had enough of these conspiracy theories. It just isn't true. I read it, I presented it to the Pope and we resealed the envelope.'

As for the doomsday predictions, we know that a terrible worldwide natural catastrophe or a nuclear war could happen, but that would be the result of our sins. This is why we must heed our Lady's message for prayer and penance. We also know that with the spread of secularism and religious indifference, many Catholics are no longer practicing their faith. But again, the remedy for this is prayer, penance and a fervent Christian life, as our Lady requested at Fatima. As for any triumph of Satan over the Church, this is impossible. Jesus himself said so when he told Saint Peter, 'You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it' (Mt 16:18). It will not be Satan who will conquer, but Jesus with his Immaculate Mother who will crush the head of the serpent.

Objection: The text released by the Vatican is not written in the form of a letter.

Some of the clerics who lived at the time the Third Secret was written mentioned it in terms of a letter, but this was not an emphatic point they were making. The photocopy of the original manuscript released by the Holy See does not have a formal address to the Bishop, however it does have a certain likeness to a letter. The document begins with a title like those in Lucia's memoirs and has a kind of introduction that makes reference to the Bishop:

[title] The third part of the secret revealed at the Cova da Iria-Fatima, on 13 July 1917.

[Introduction] I write in obedience to you, my God, who command me to do so through his Excellency the Bishop of Leiria and through your Most Holy Mother and mine.

Archbishop Bertone said that the point about the document being written in the form of a signed letter is not very important. He said of some of his critics that 'they look at everything through the magnifying glass of their own biases. As a result they latch on to the most unbelievable things.'

As a final plea, let us set aside our doubts and support our Holy Father in the present struggle with our prayers, our fidelity, our service and our love! This would be very pleasing to the Immaculate Heart of Mary! I am absolutely confident that the Holy Father has fully conveyed Our Lady of Fatima's message to us!"^[164]

PART VII
THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA
ONE HUNDRED YEARS
LATER

World events in 2017 have deteriorated even beyond what they were when Our Lady of the Rosary delivered her message to the three innocent shepherd children of Fatima. In 1917, the countries of the world were involved in a great war, millions were dying, not by war alone, but by the ravages of disease. Organized religion, specifically Christianity and Catholicism, were under assault by various agents of government. People were offending God greatly by turning away from Him and blaspheming His Mother.

Today, various countries of the world are again fighting wars with the prospect for another great war on the horizon that has the potential to claim the lives of millions more than the previous world wars. We are ravaged by diseases both old and new, and people the world over continue to offend God by denying Him and blaspheming His Mother.

Consequently, Russia continues to spread her errors throughout the world as Our Lady foretold and we continue to see an assault on Christianity everywhere, including within the borders of the United States of America. In many countries, Christians are tortured for their beliefs. Richard Wurmbrand, a Romanian pastor writes of the fourteen years he spent in Communist prisons for the crime of “fervent belief in Jesus Christ and his public witness concerning his faith.” In *Tortured for Christ*, Wurmbrand recounts his “years of periodic physical torture, constant suffering from hunger and cold, the anguish of brainwashing and mental cruelty.”^[165]

His experience is not singular. Hundreds of thousands of Christians are forced to “meet in homes, in basements, and in the woods.” Yet, the people of the “underground church” have tenacious faith and remarkable endurance.

Even the United States, with its constitutional right to practice religion without interference from the government, has seen Christianity come under assault over the past three quarters of a century. It begins with subtle changes that appear outrageous, but harmless, to a majority people. Often euphemisms are used to mask the truth of what is really happening. Murder of innocent children by abortion is called “Choice.” The removal of any reference to God or His works in public schools, even those references that are historical in nature, is called “separation of church and state.” Death of the elderly due to lack of proper care is called “prudent health care,” and the medically assisted suicide of those who are sick or just plain tired of living is referred to as death with “dignity.”

But over time, as we have seen, some of these outrageous acts are upheld by the courts and become the law of the land. The following chronology is a small sampling of events that have occurred in the United States over the past 60 years. It graphically demonstrates how desensitized America has become to the erosion of moral values. It is that erosion that tends, over time, to bring this nation and the entire world on a course that virtually no one wants to travel. Each act, however small and innocuous it may seem, may bring the United States and the world one step closer to the retribution promised by Our Lady in her message to the children of Fatima.

- **1958** – Steven Engel, a Jewish New Yorker, joins with other parents to file suit against the State of New York over a state-endorsed prayer that was being recited in schools. The prayer read simply, “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.”^[166]
- **June 25, 1962** – The United States Supreme Court issues a decision siding with Engel and ruling that the required prayer was inconsistent with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution which reads, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”^[167]
- **1963** – The US Supreme Court banned bible reading and overturned a state law banning the teaching of evolution essentially meaning that the theory of evolution and not the theory of creationism must be taught in public schools.^[168]
- **1971** – Norma McCorvey, aka Jane Roe sues Dallas County District Attorney Henry Wade, who enforced a Texas law that prohibited abortion, except to save a woman’s life.
- **January 22, 1973** – The US Supreme Court affirms the legality of a woman’s right to have an abortion under Section one of the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution which reads, “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to

the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” In his majority opinion, Justice Blackmun noted that, for nearly all such references in the Constitution, "use of the word is such that it has application only postnatally. None indicates, with any assurance, that it has any possible prenatal application."^[169]

- **1987** – American artist and photographer Andres Serrano submitted his work, entitled Immersion (Piss Christ) to the Southeastern Center of Contemporary Art's (SCCA) “Awards in the Visual Arts” competition. The work is a very large photograph of a small plastic crucifix submerged in a glass of the artist's urine. The work was awarded a prize by the SCCA which is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, a US Government Agency. In 1989, the same piece was exhibited in, and favorably received by, the Stux Gallery in New York where the artist received \$15,000 for the work, including \$5,000 from the government agency. Catholic nun and art critic, Sister Wendy Beckett, stated in a televised interview that she “regarded the work as not blasphemous but a statement on ‘this is what we are doing to Christ.’” During a retrospective of Serrano's work at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in 1997, George Pell, the Archbishop of Melbourne, was denied an injunction from the Supreme Court of Victoria that would have prevented the NGV from publicly displaying the work.^[170]
- **1996** – Artist Chris Ofili debuted a painting entitled “Holy Virgin Mary” which depicts a black Virgin Mary splattered with elephant dung and laden with pornographic pictures, at an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. The Catholic League led a protest of the painting but Fr. George Wilson, a Jesuit ecclesiologist from Cincinnati defends the portrait of Our Blessed Mother surrounded with pictures of vaginas and anuses,

spattered with dung and tried “desperately to put critics of the painting on the defensive.” Despite the controversial nature of the work, it was sold at Christie’s London auction for \$4.6 million.^[171]

- **2007** – San Diego, California high school math teacher Bradley Johnson was ordered to remove his patriotic and faith-themed banners from his classroom after years of display. The banners carried such objectionable slogans as “In God We Trust,” “God Bless America,” and “God Shed His Grace on Thee.”^[172]
- **August 20, 2008** – The Democrat National Committee refuses to invite the Archbishop of Denver, Charles J. Chaput, to pray or speak at the upcoming Democrat National Convention to be held in Denver. Former Boston Mayor Ray Flynn calls it a “serious oversight” and an “insult” to the values of pro-life Catholics.^[173]
- **January 11, 2012** – “The US Supreme Court ruled that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission had overstepped its bounds in applying secular standards to a minister of religion called to work in a church school.”^[174]
- **February 2012** – The US Conference of Catholic Bishops declared that the “small alteration” that President Obama announced requiring “all health-care plans in the US to cover sterilizations is “unacceptable” because, among other things, it does not protect the freedom-of-conscience rights of secular for-profit employees, or secular non-profit employers, or religious insurers, or self-insured religious employees, or individual Americans.” The Act forced Catholic institutions to provide birth control, abortion drugs and other contraceptive services and would require Catholic institutions to abandon their doctrines on reproductive issues or face catastrophic fines forcing them to close hospitals that care for about a sixth of U.S. patients.^[175]
- **March 13, 2012** – The “2012 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report” is released to the public and lists 190 nations,

each classified by one of three categories: “primary concern;” “of concern;” and “monitored.” The Vatican was ranked with Poland, Egypt, Chile and 67 other countries as being “of concern,” the middle category. The Obama State Department said the “Vatican made the list because it is considered vulnerable to laundering and because it had recently put a program into place to prevent financial abuses.”^[176]

- **March 27, 2012** – The US Supreme Court upheld the federal appeals court ruling that prevents teachers from displaying on a classroom wall any statement of religious views such as those displayed by San Diego high school teacher Bradley Johnson. However, a study done that same month concluded that there is a double standard when teaching about religion in public schools. According to the study, the courts are “removing all signs of Judeo-Christianity from public schools. Not only must prayer be prohibited, but a cross and the Ten Commandments must be removed or covered up, a valedictorian is banned from thanking God for his help, a football coach is prohibited from bowing his head during a student-led pre-game prayer, the singing of Christmas carols is banned, and school calendars are required to recognize a “winter holiday” instead of a “Christmas holiday.” There is also the complete omission of the history of the Founding Fathers’ public recognition of Christianity.” In fact, the study concluded that Christianity is being targeted while “an analysis of 38 textbooks used in the sixth through twelfth grades in public schools found that since the 1990’s, discussions of Islam are taking up more and more pages, while the space devoted to Judaism and Christianity has simultaneously decreased.”^[177]
- **March 30, 2012** – A Catholic Group was ordered to leave Vanderbilt University after refusing to comply with the University’s non-discrimination clause. The non-discrimination clause requires that campus Christian groups (among others) must allow non-believers to serve in leadership roles. One of the larger groups on campus is Vanderbilt Catholic, but at the end of

the year, that group will no longer be allowed on campus.^[178]

- **April 26, 2017** – A high-school math teacher in Florida banned Christian ninth-grade students from wearing cross necklaces in class. The teacher called Christian crosses “gang symbols” and actually “forced” a ninth-grader to remove her cross telling the young girl the cross was “disrespectful.”^[179]

These few examples demonstrate a gradual but consistent diminution of the moral fiber of the American society and a destruction of the Judeo-Christian principles on which this nation was founded. There is clearly an assault on Christianity generally, and on Catholicism specifically, that has taken hold in this country despite its great constitutional experiment of religious freedom first conceived on this continent by Roger Williams at Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. These examples also provide proof that the assault comes not only from outside the Church, but also from within the faith, as Sister Lucia warned Pope John Paul II.

Ryszard Legutko, who spent forty years in communist-controlled Poland, noted that unlike post-Reformation Europe, religion in the United States was not under the control of the throne because of the separation of church and state. However, he quickly adds, “...until recently, this was widely believed to mean only that there is no [government] established religion. The idea that religion has no access to the public square is a recent phenomenon.”^[180] It is a fact, Legutko continues, that the “United States was founded on Christian principles and that people who are elected to the public functions are religious people, sometimes with very strong religious views, and that these views affect their political opinion. It’s not that religious truth is to be translated literally into policy, but it has a role to play.”^[181]

Noted author and motivational speaker Dr. John R. Wood, in his book entitled, *Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Mission: 5 Steps to Winning the War Within*, notes that saints, for the most part, are ordinary people who have done extraordinary things. He explains that there is a saint within each of us and all we need to do is to bring it out. A remarkable concept to say the least, but the three children of Fatima, two of which have already become saints, provide a fine example of how this concept works. They witnessed a miraculous Apparition and changed their lives accordingly. Thousands of others witnessed the same miracle of the sun performed by Our Lady of

Fatima. How many of those lives were irrevocably altered as a result and how many resumed their own personal struggle of their daily lives soon after? We witness acts of a miraculous nature nearly every day but we hardly take notice. The birth of a child, the cure of the stricken, the reformed life of the addicted, the sunrise, the sunset and all that happens in between. Too often the personal struggles involved in earning a living and/or raising a family take precedence over the observance of those daily signs.

John Wood continues,

“These are difficult times for the Catholic Church and the United States of America. There is only one solution to the problems we face...saints! Becoming a saint is a choice, and we must begin choosing the saint within each of us. The biggest crisis of our time is not economic, health care, or vocations, but is an identity crisis. We have forgotten our mission to become saints and forgotten our story as Catholics. We must rediscover that mission and hold each other accountable to accepting responsibility for that mission. Business as usual is not going to cut it. We need heroic Catholicism. We must stop talking, and start walking...stop crying, and start sweating...stop defining ourselves by our sins, and start realizing we are saints in the making! Everything we need to accomplish our mission is in the Church...but the Catholic Church is a sleeping giant. It is time we wake the sleeping giant!

Each passing day brings an instability in the world that drives us closer than ever before to a cataclysmic war between intolerant and quick-to-act nations with fundamental value differences. One recent headline of Sunday July 9, 2017 read, “*Kim Jong-un warns Donald Trump He is Pushing North Korea to the Brink of Nuclear War.*”^[182] In these dangerous times, who will lead us in the prayers and sacrifices demanded of us by Our Lady of Fatima. If, in fact, the Third Secret of Fatima was fulfilled with the 1981 attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II, it still does not mean the security of our faith. If the Third Secret has yet to come to fulfillment, we must be ever mindful of the consequences of our inactions and of the things Our Lady requires of us if the cataclysmic fulfillment is to be avoided.

CONCLUSION

Pope John Paul II was “convinced that the contemporary world is engaged in an enormous struggle between the forces of good and evil, between a living faith in the Supreme Being and the absolute rejection of God.” He commented shortly after the assassination attempt that the message of “Fatima is more important now than in 1917!”^[183]

Pope John Paul II didn’t develop that opinion only after the failed attempt on his life. He expressed similar sentiments as a Cardinal in 1978. He was quoted in a November 9, 1978 article in the New York City News as saying:

“We are today before the greatest combat that mankind has ever seen. I do not believe that the Christian community has completely understood it. We are today before the final struggle between the Church and the anti-Church, between the Gospel and the anti-Gospel.”

It is perhaps Our Lady’s 1917 warning about Communist Russia and the spreading of its errors throughout the world to which the Saintly Pontiff may have been referring in those remarks. Our Lady predicted that “Communism would cause wars and persecutions of the Church, in which the good would be martyred, the Holy Father would have much to suffer and various nations would be annihilated.”^[184] Some, including Pope John Paul II, believed that these events were characterized by the turbulence of the twentieth century. Others, as we have seen, believe the culmination of Mary’s prophecy has yet to be realized.

Regardless of individual beliefs on the fulfillment of Our Lady’s Third Secret, it is very evident today that the message of Fatima has not been heeded by the world, not even by all the 1.2 billion Catholics in the world, and that Russia has not been converted, and that her errors are spreading across the globe reaching even to within the borders of these United States of America.

Fr. Andrew Apostoli, C.F.R., in his book, *Fatima for Today: The Urgent Marian Message of Hope*, very succinctly provides a list of the errors or sins which Our Lady of Fatima instructed us to reject. They include:

- “The sin of blasphemy against God, our Lady, the angels and saints and those things that are sacred because they are associated with honor and worship of God. Such offenses express an actual, even if indirect, hatred of God.” These sins emanate from the

atheism that Communism spawns.

- “Sins against life: abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, assisted suicide and the whole ‘culture of death.’ Add to that list murder, physical abuse, gang wars, ethnic and racial cleansing, and all the other violent crimes that come from hatred in our hearts.” Fr. Apostoli recognizes the relationship between Communism and the aforementioned culture of death since Communist Russia does “not recognize any God-given dignity to human life. A person was important only to the degree that he was useful to the state. Therefore, Russia became the first Christian nation in the world to permit abortion...Communism teaches the radical equality of the sexes. Women in Russia, and later in Communist China, were required to enter the workforce in service to the state. What was forced upon the peoples taken over by Communism, was unwittingly adopted in western Europe and the United States in the name of equality.... The movement for so-called women’s liberation in these countries insisted that women could not take their equal place among men in the workforce unless they had complete control over their ability to reproduce and that control included the power to kill their unborn children.

As abortion has lessened the dignity of life, euthanasia to eliminate the terminally ill, the handicapped and the elderly has gained acceptance. In an atheistic society, these people’s lives are seen to have no value, but only constitute a drain on the state’s resources.”

- “Another cause of the culture of death, which was fostered by Communism, is the attack on the traditional family.... The family is the building block of society. If families are strong, the society is strong; if they are weak, then the society will be weak.... Karl Marx saw the traditional family as an enemy of freedom and equality.... This notion that the traditional family was the enemy of equality spread to Europe and the United States, where war was declared on those that supported traditional marriage.... Little by little, the legal supports beneath marriage have been stripped away. First divorce was legalized, next cohabitating

couples were given legal benefits that once were only granted to married couples.... When marriage is no longer honored and no longer understood as the only proper place for sexual relations, then sexual immorality runs rampant and weakens family life even further. Here we must recall our Lady's words to little Jacinta that more souls are lost by sins of impurity than by any other."^[185]

In his book, *The Demon in Democracy*, Ryszard Legutko notes the various similarities between liberal democracy and communism saying, "... what makes these two systems similar is that both liberal democrats and the communists politicized the entirety of social, individual and communal life. The communists believed the entire social life, even the arts and philosophy, should be permeated by the spirit of communism. The liberal democrats do exactly the same. That is, they believe that everything in the liberal democratic society should be liberal democrat. This aggressive attitude," Legutko points out, "aims to imbue the entire human existence with one set of ideas. In both cases, it implies that you must cut off human heritage and everything that came before in the realm of ideas.... During the last decades, deliberate policies of governments and institutions have also dismantled and redefined the family in order to create a new type of society – a new man. This too, is something that reminds us of the communist regime. To establish a new communist society, the family was the first object of attack."^[186]

Despite the pessimistic tone used in describing the spread of Russia's errors, there is reason for great hope. Our Lady has provided the answer and doing the things she prescribed will cause God to abandon his plans for punishment through the infliction of a great war, the annihilation of nations and the suffering of the Holy Father. Our Lady of Fatima told us very clearly that we must reject sin, say the Rosary every day, make the five First Saturday devotions and sacrifice for the conversion of sinners. In doing these things, Russia will be converted, God will stop being offended and many souls will be saved from the fires of hell.

It doesn't sound too difficult. But what impact can just a few good people with a personal devotion to the Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary have on a world of almost 7.4 billion? God himself provides the answer to that question in Genesis 18:32 in which God promised Abraham that he would abandon his plan to destroy Sodom if just 10 righteous people could be

found there. Each of us holds the key to salvation both of the earth and of our immortal soul. It is up to us how we use that key.

Sister Lucia dos Santos died of old age at the Carmelite convent of St. Teresa of Coimbra in central Portugal at 5:25 PM local time on Sunday February 13, 2005. Her death fulfilled the promise of Our Lady to the children in saying that Francisco and Jacinta would go to heaven soon, but Lucia would be here for a long time. Though she was the last of the surviving visionaries of Our Lady of Fatima in 1917, the message of Our Lady as given to Lucia and her cousins lives on throughout the world today as does Her promise of hope.

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WHY WE'RE CATHOLIC



OUR REASONS FOR FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE
TRENT HORN

WHY WE'RE CATHOLIC

Our Reasons for Faith, Hope, and Love

TRENT HORN

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For

St. Theresa Parish

Phoenix, Arizona

Introduction

Why We Believe . . . Anything

I was sitting in a booth at a restaurant in San Diego waiting for the religious equivalent of a “blind date” to begin.

A few weeks earlier, some Catholic friends of mine asked me to meet with their son while he was home from college. They wanted me to speak to him because he told his parents he wasn’t going to church with them anymore because he was now an atheist. They asked me, “Can you help him see he needs to start going back to church? Can you help him get over all this atheist stuff?”

Then their son, who I’ll call Vincent, walked through the door. I raised my hand and he did his best to manage a half-smile before he sat down.

“How’s it going?” he asked.

“Good, I’m Trent.”

“Yeah, I know.”

I didn’t expect this to go very well and, to be frank, I understood his lack of enthusiasm about having lunch with me. That’s why I decided just to be honest with him.

“You think I’m here to talk you into being Catholic again?”

“Sure, it’s why my parents kept asking me to see you,” he said.

“Look, I don’t think there’s anything I can say that’s going to make you change what you believe. I just think you should believe in something because you think it’s true, not just because it’s convenient for you. Does that make sense?”

He nodded in agreement.

“How about this. Why don’t you just tell me why you’re an atheist.”

“I know you wrote a book on atheism, so I’m not going to debate you,” he shot back.

“I don’t feel like debating anybody over a plate of mozzarella sticks,” I responded. “I just want to find out what you believe, that’s all.”

So for the next twenty minutes I asked him questions. What do you mean by the term “atheist”? What are the best arguments for and against God? What

are the worst? What do you think are the good and bad things about the Catholic Church?

By the time our entrées arrived we were having a good discussion. I gently challenged some of his atheistic beliefs but, true to my word, it wasn't a debate. It was just two guys having a deep conversation.

As I dipped my quesadilla into some salsa I said to Vincent, "I think I've got a good grasp on why you're an atheist, and I actually like talking to people like you. You've given this issue a lot of thought, and if I'm wrong about atheism I'd want someone like you to show me what I don't understand."

"Thanks," he said.

"But it's a two-way street, Vincent. Be honest. If you were wrong about the Catholic Church, would you want someone like me to show you what you were mistaken about?"

He took a sip of his soda while he thought the question over, and finally said, "Yeah, I'd be open to that."

"Okay, well, I've spent a lot of time asking you questions, so now it's your turn. Why don't you ask me about what Catholics believe and I'll tell you why we believe that stuff. You can take my reasons or leave them, but I think your parents will be happy that we at least talked about them." Vincent agreed and we kept at it for another hour.

As the check came, he said to me, "I appreciate what you said. I'll definitely think about all of it."

"And I'll think about what you said," I replied. "Remember, it's a two-way street."

A COMMON DESIRE

I don't look at people who've left the Catholic Church or who aren't Catholic as potential "customers." They're just people. They have things they love and things they hate. They may differ from me in lots of ways, but they almost certainly have one thing in common with me: they don't want to be ignorant and they do want to be happy. I became Catholic in high school because 1) I thought it was true, and 2) finding answers to my deepest questions about existence and purpose made me happy.

It would be selfish of me to keep to myself the peace and joy I receive from being Catholic, so I share this "good news" with others. My aim in this book is simple: to explain why Catholics believe what they believe. I haven't given

every explanation I can think of, because most people aren't in a rush to read a book that is so thick it can double as a step stool. Instead, I've presented the reasons that made the biggest impact on me during my conversion to the Catholic faith.

If you are Catholic, this book should give you a great starting point for discussions with your non-Catholic friends and family. If you aren't Catholic, then I hope you will at least be willing to hear me out, like Vincent did. Even if it doesn't convince you, it should help you have more thoughtful conversations with Catholic friends and family because you will better understand their point of view.

Whoever you are, whether you're a believer, a skeptic, or you're just not sure what you believe, I hope at a minimum this book will encourage you to follow an ancient piece of wisdom: "Test everything, retain what is good."¹

PART 1

TRUTH

GOD

Why We Believe in Truth

When someone walks toward you with clenched fists, it's normal to become nervous. When I saw a student approach me in this way at a Texas university, I feared for the worst. Fortunately, he just wanted to beat me up with words.

When my presentation on the subject "Why Be Catholic?" was finished, he came up to me and said, "You are one of the most arrogant people I've ever met. You think you're right and everybody else is wrong." I was surprised by how angry this man was, and as I began to respond to him several students came over to see what was happening.

"You're saying it's arrogant for me to think I'm right about a religious truth and everyone who disagrees with me is wrong?" I replied.

"Yeah!"

"Okay," I continued, "I think a few people here would probably disagree with you about me being arrogant. Are you right and those people who disagree with you are wrong?"

The young man looked confused for a few seconds before asking, "What are you getting at?"

By now the few students watching had turned into a crowd of dozens. I explained what I meant.

"You're right. It is bad to be *arrogant*, but it's not bad to be *accurate*. If we possess the truth about something, then those who disagree with that truth will be wrong. That doesn't make us better than them, it just means we have to be willing to listen to one another so that we can avoid error and find the truth."

"But there is no absolute truth!" he fired back. "Everybody decides what's true for themselves."

The nineteenth-century French novelist Gustave Flaubert once said, "There is no truth. There is only perception." Is this statement true, or is it just Flaubert's perception?

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Here's the problem with saying "there is no absolute truth": this statement is an absolute truth. It claims, "It is true in all times and all places that no statement is true in all times and all places." But that is as contradictory as saying, "I can't speak a word of English." It makes no sense to claim it is *true* that there are no *truths*.

But what is truth? When we say a statement is true, we mean it "corresponds to reality." It describes the way the world really is. Any statement that describes the world contains either a *subjective* truth or an *objective* truth.²

A truth is subjective if it is only true for the person who is making the statement. If I say, "Mint chocolate chip ice cream tastes great," I am telling a subjective truth. When people disagree about such truths they usually say, "That's true for you, but not for me." It may be true for *Trent Horn* that ice cream tastes great, but a person who is allergic to ice cream may say that's not true for *him*. This isn't contradictory because subjective truths describe people's *feelings toward the world* rather than *facts about the world*.

GETTING OUR TERMS RIGHT

- **Subjective truth:** Statements that describe opinions and are only true for the person who makes the statement.
 - **Objective truth:** Statements that describe reality and are true for all people.
-

A truth is *objective*, however, when it does not merely describe how a person feels, but describes a fact about reality that is true for everyone. Whether you love or hate ice cream, for example, it is *objectively* true that ice cream begins to melt when left out at room temperature (provided the room isn't an igloo). Objective truths cannot be true only for some people. They are true or false for everyone because they describe reality, and reality is something everyone has to accept, like it or not.

So what does this have to do with religion or with being Catholic?

ICE-CREAM TRUTH OR MEDICINE TRUTH?

Some people think choosing a religion or a church to attend is like choosing a new pair of shoes or a flavor of ice cream. If it tastes good or feels great, it doesn't matter which one you pick. They think religious truths are *subjective*, and so they aren't true for everyone. This means if something feels right to

you, it's as good as any other set of beliefs.

That's why it can seem arrogant if someone says his religion is right and everyone should belong to it. That would be like saying everyone should only wear sandals or eat mint chocolate chip ice cream (though I admit it is a delicious afternoon treat). In both cases we would say, "That may be true for you, but it's not true for me."

But religious truths describe basic, important features of reality, which makes them *objective* rather than *subjective*. Claims about religion are more like "medicine truth" than "ice-cream truth."

Imagine if we chose medicine like we chose ice cream. We might say, "Mmmm, this pill tastes like strawberries . . . I'll have three." You could get hurt or killed by doing that. You might also stay sick or get worse because you didn't take the right medicine. In this case, what matters is not the subjective truth of how the medicine tastes, but the objective truth of what it will do to your body.

The same is true when it comes to religion. Even if you don't believe in religion at all, that belief should be grounded in facts about reality and not just feelings toward religion. The bottom line is that we should choose a church or faith not because of how it makes us feel, but because it is objectively true and objectively good for us.

RELIGION, RAJAHS, AND ELEPHANTS

Have you ever heard the story about the three blind men and an elephant? The first blind man touched the elephant's tail and said it was a rope. The second man touched its large ears and said it was a fan. The third blind man touched the animal's massive side and said it was a wall.

Then, a wise king called a rajah told the three men, "An elephant is a large animal. You each have a part of the truth, but all the parts must be put together in order to find the whole truth. So it is with your religions. Each has part of the truth, but you must put them together in order to find the whole truth."

But combining contradictory and false religions no more produces a true religion than combining rope, fans, and a wall produces a true description of an elephant.

This parable also assumes that someone does have all of the truth—the rajah. How do skeptics who deny there is one true religion know whether they are like the rajah and not like one of the blind men? Is it possible some religions contain more truth than others, and God has given one religion the fullness of truth?

But isn't it arrogant for someone like me to say I am a part of the "right religion" and everyone else is wrong? If I had been born in India, wouldn't I be writing a book called *Why We're Hindu* instead of *Why We're Catholic*?

Maybe, but if I had been born in ancient China I might have written a book called *Why We Believe the Earth Is Flat*. Being born in a time or place that is far from the truth doesn't disprove the existence of the truth.

When it comes to believing in a religion or any other basic truth about reality (like the shape of the earth), we all think that we're right and that those who disagree with us are wrong. Even people who ignore religion think they're *right* that religion should be ignored. They also think that those people who tell them they should convert are *wrong*. This isn't a sign of arrogance; it's a sign of a genuine desire to find the truth.

A person, or even lots of people, can be kind and loving and at the same time be mistaken about religion. The loving thing to do is not leave someone in ignorance, but to help him find the truth. In fact, some people have to be right when it comes to religious truths, because in many cases there are no other options. For example, either religious people are right and God exists or atheists are right and God does not exist. There is no third option, and both can't be right because that would lead to the contradiction of God existing and not existing at the same time.

As a Catholic I don't claim that every other religion is 100 percent wrong. Starting with the most basic questions about the world (which means they deal with objective truths), I try to see which religion best answers my questions: Is there a God? What can we know about God from reason? Did God ever reveal himself to man? Which religion has the best historical claim to being the recipient of God's revelation? Does that religion still exist today?

More than one religion is capable of correctly answering some of these questions. For example, if there is only one God then Christians, Jews, and Muslims would all be correct. If God became man, however, then only one of these religions would be correct. As we answer these questions, you'll see that while many belief systems truthfully answer some of them, only one religion consistently and correctly answers all of them. If we care about truth, then shouldn't we find out which religion has these answers?

PROPOSING RATHER THAN IMPOSING TRUTH

In a video he posted online, atheist and magician Penn Jillette described how a Christian approached him after one of his shows and gave him a Bible. Instead of being offended, Penn said the Christian was "a good man." If Christians actually believed their faith was true, he continued, then they should always share it with other people. Jillette said, "How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much would you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible

and not tell them that?”³

WHY WE BELIEVE: TRUTH

- It is contradictory to say it is true that there is no truth.
- Objective truth describes reality and so it is true or false for everyone.
- Since religion describes reality, its central claims are objective and can be investigated.

Why We Believe in Science

As a child I wasn't very interested in religion, but I liked science. When I was ten years old, our school's Young Astronomers Club got to visit the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California. In one part of the tour, we stood on a catwalk suspended high above a dozen scientists who were preparing the Cassini spacecraft for launch. As I peered over the railing, I thought of what science had given humanity: things like the Internet, airplanes, and modern medicine.

The next year I entered junior high and decided I would only trust what science could prove. But during my conversion to the Catholic faith a few years later, I realized I had put too much faith in science, and not enough faith in nonscientific ways of discovering the truth.

WHAT IS SCIENCE?

During the Middle Ages, science was defined as “the knowledge of things from their causes”⁴ (the Latin word *scientia* means “knowledge”). This included knowledge of natural things, like stars and planets, as well as knowledge of supernatural things, like angels or God. But in 1837, William Whewell coined the term “scientist” to refer to someone who seeks systematic, *natural* explanations for observed phenomena.

Under this new definition, scientists could not use God as an explanation for what they observed. Since God exists beyond the observable, natural world, he couldn't be studied with science—but that doesn't mean God does not exist.

A metal detector can't detect diamonds, but that doesn't prove there are no lost gemstones at the beach that may have fallen out of someone's piece of jewelry. Like metal detectors, the “thought tools” we use to investigate the world have limits, and the limit of science is the boundary of the natural world. There may be something beyond that boundary, like God, but we need other tools besides science in order to find out.

Some people think science is the only tool we should use to investigate the world and we shouldn't believe anything that can't be proven scientifically. This attitude is called *scientism*, and it's self-refuting because there is no scientific experiment that proves the only reliable form of knowledge is science. In addition, we believe in many things that can't be proven with science.

If in answer to the question "Is science important?" you say yes, how would you prove that scientifically? There is no experiment or machine that shows science is important. Instead, we use logical reasoning to prove this truth and many others.

For example, science can tell us how the world *is*, but it can't tell us how the world *ought to be*. Science gave us airplanes and medicine, but it also gave us atomic bombs and nerve gas. Science can't show us what is good or evil because it is just a tool that can be used for either good or evil. We need other thought tools, like philosophy and personal experience, in order to understand truths about the world that science cannot discover—including truths related to who or what created the world.

A SCIENTIST REVEALS THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE

In 1960, Sir Peter Medawar won a Nobel Prize for research that made organ and tissue transplants possible. He also wrote a book called *Advice to a Young Scientist*, in which he said the following:

"There is no quicker way for a scientist to bring discredit upon himself and upon his profession than roundly to declare—particularly when no declaration of any kind is called for—that science knows or soon will know the answers to all questions worth asking."⁵

Even though he was not religious, Medawar went on to say that we would have to turn to literature and religion for "suitable answers" to questions like "How did everything begin?" and "What are we all here for?"

IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ANTI-SCIENCE?

Far from being against science, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC)—an official book of Catholic teachings—praises "scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge" (CCC 283). For example, Pope St. John Paul II told the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences that evolution was "more than a hypothesis," and Pope Benedict XVI went even further, saying that there were "many scientific proofs in favor of evolution."⁶

But what about Galileo? Didn't the Church persecute him for teaching that

the earth revolves around the sun? Doesn't this show that the Catholic Church opposes scientific discoveries that contradict what is established by faith?

First, the Catholic Church did not condemn the heliocentric or sun-centered view of our solar system. According to the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, at this time in history “there was no official Catholic position on the Copernican [heliocentric] system, and it was certainly not a heresy.”⁷ Many scientists in Galileo's time accepted ancient Greek arguments for a stationary earth, arguments that had not been refuted. Today we can use satellites to prove the earth revolves around the sun, but five hundred years ago the question was far from settled.

In fact, Galileo thought the planets orbited the sun in a perfect circle, whereas they actually have an elliptical orbit. Because of this, Galileo's theory could not account for all the observable movements of the planets, which is one reason Pope Urban VIII urged Galileo to treat his theory as tentative. Unfortunately, Galileo chose to mock the pope in his work *Dialogue Concerning the Two World Systems*, in which a character named Simplicio, which means “simpleton” in English, represented the pope's views. Galileo also claimed that Scripture would have to be reinterpreted in light of his findings, a conclusion that lay outside his area of expertise. Both of these missteps led to his famous trial in 1633.

Contrary to popular belief, Galileo was not tortured, but was found to be “under suspicion of heresy.” According to his friend Francesco Niccolini, Galileo was placed under house arrest but was given a servant to attend to him until he died of old age.⁸ Pope St. John Paul II later apologized for any injustices committed against Galileo during his trial and reaffirmed the positive relationship between the Church and science.

DOES SCIENCE LEAD TO ATHEISM?

Although some outspoken scientists happen to be atheists, according to the Pew Research Center 51 percent of scientists believe in God or a higher power.⁹ It's true that scientists are more likely to identify as atheists, but Elaine Ecklund has shown in her book *Science vs. Religion* that science itself doesn't turn people into atheists; atheists are just more likely to pursue careers in science.

This means that there is nothing about science itself that makes it incompatible with religion. Some of history's greatest contributions to science have come from religious people. This includes Catholic friars like Gregor Mendel, who is called the “Father of Modern Genetics,” and priests like Fr. Georges Lemaître, who is called the “Father of the Big Bang Theory.”

Because of the ever-changing nature of science, the Catholic Church only teaches on matters related to faith or morals. The Church does not infallibly endorse scientific theories, even though it has long supported science. For example, the medieval Church funded scientists who helped create the modern calendar. Today the Vatican operates a large observatory that secular astronomers use on a regular basis.

According to historian J. L. Heilbron, “The Roman Catholic Church gave more financial and social support to the study of astronomy for over six centuries, from the recovery of ancient learning during the late Middle Ages into the Enlightenment, than any other, and, probably, all other, institutions.”¹⁰

WHAT IS FAITH?

When people say, “Science contradicts faith,” they usually define faith as “believing without evidence” or “believing in spite of whatever the evidence may say.” Science may contradict that *definition of faith*, but not the traditional understanding of faith.

In the broadest sense, faith is just a kind of trust we have in another person or thing. We might say, for example, “I have faith that John will finish our group project.” Even scientists have faith that the laws of nature will operate the same way in all times and places, even though they can’t prove the laws of nature will always do this.

For Catholics, faith is “the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us.”¹¹ If God does exist (the evidence for which we will examine shortly), then it is perfectly reasonable for people to trust, or have faith, in God, just as we would have faith or trust in other people. This includes trusting what God has revealed to an individual through something like prayer, or in a public way through things like the Bible or the teachings of the Church.

GETTING OUR TERMS RIGHT

- **Faith (common sense):** A kind of trust we put in a person or thing based on evidence and experience.
 - **Faith (religious sense):** Trust in God’s promise based on evidence and experience of God’s revelation.¹²
-

But doesn't having faith mean you don't have evidence for what you believe? After all, if you had enough evidence you wouldn't need faith. But consider this: according to the United States Parachute Association, 99.99 percent of skydivers survive their jumps. Now, imagine you are wearing a parachute you know has been packed correctly and you step toward the door of the plane. As you look down at the ground two miles beneath your feet and see the tops of clouds passing by, I ask you this: "Are you nervous?"¹³

Probably! Even with so much evidence that you will survive jumping out of an airplane you still need to *trust* that evidence. You still need to make a "leap of faith." This is not a blind leap or belief without evidence. It is a reasonable belief that trusts a conclusion based on the weight of the evidence.

With that in mind, let's examine the evidence for the foundational truth of the Catholic faith: the existence of God.

WHY WE BELIEVE: SCIENCE

- Science is one tool we use to discover truths about reality, but it is not our only tool, because it is limited to describing the physical, natural world.
- We must use other "thought tools," like logical reasoning, to investigate what may lie beyond the physical, natural world.
- Faith does not contradict science because faith is not opposed to evidence. Faith is a trust we have in something and, in a religious sense, it is a trust in God's promises.

Why We Believe in a Creator

Once during a debate on the existence of God, my opponent tried to use science to prove we should be atheists.

He said ancient people believed in God because they saw things they couldn't explain, like lightning. But science has now explained the cause of lightning and, eventually, it would explain the entire universe. This means there is no need to invoke God as a cause of anything and, therefore, no good reason to believe God exists.

When it was my turn to speak I asked my opponent if he was open-minded. He said, "Of course," to which I asked, "Okay, then what specific evidence would change your mind and convince you God exists?"

He replied, "If you prayed and an amputated limb grew back, then I'd believe." Remembering his earlier statement, I asked him, "If this ever happened, how would you know God was responsible? Maybe science will discover a natural explanation for why the limb grew back."

He thought about my question and then admitted, "I don't know . . . but I mean, how else could that happen unless God did it?"

Now I knew exactly where I wanted the conversation to go. I said, "If you're impressed by a limb coming into existence from nothing, then why aren't you even more impressed by a whole universe coming into existence from nothing? If only God could regrow an amputated limb, then wouldn't only God be capable of creating an entire universe from nothing?"

Later in the debate I explained to the audience that my arguments for the existence of God did not rely on gaps in our knowledge being ignorantly filled with the phrase "God did it." Instead, the arguments for the existence of God use *positive* evidence to show the universe as a whole could only have God as its cause.

THE FIRST-CAUSE ARGUMENT

Here's a simple argument for the existence of God.^{[14](#)}

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause for its existence.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause for its existence.

Even if this argument works, how do we know the cause of the universe is God?

Since the universe includes all of space and time, the cause of the universe would have to exist beyond space and time, because it created those things. This cause would have to be immaterial, that is, not made of matter, and eternal, not exist in time. Since science only studies forces and objects that exist in space and time, this means that the cause of the universe is not something science can ever locate or study. As we've seen, we need another thought tool besides science (like logical reasoning) in order to study the ultimate cause of reality.

REASON LEADS TO A CREATOR

The cause of the universe made space, so it can't be anything that exists in space.

The cause of the universe made time, so it can't be a force that exists in time.

The cause of all existence would have to be existence itself, or what we call God.

If the cause of the universe created something from nothing, then it must be extremely powerful. In fact, if it could create something from nothing, then there is nothing it could not do, and so it would be "all-powerful." Finally, this cause must be personal and can't be a mindless force because it chose to create a finite universe that is only a few billion years old.

An eternal, immaterial, all-powerful, personal cause is what most people imagine when they hear the word "God." But how do we know the universe began to exist? Maybe the universe has always existed and so didn't need a cause.

EVIDENCE FOR THE BEGINNING

You've probably heard of "the Big Bang," which was not an explosion in space but an expansion of space (as well as time, matter, and energy) from nothing.¹⁵ According to renowned Tufts University cosmologist Alexander Vilenkin, "All the evidence we have says that the universe had a

beginning.”¹⁶

THE FATHER OF THE BIG BANG

In the early twentieth century, the Belgian priest and physicist Georges Lemaître showed that Einstein’s new theory of gravity, called general relativity, would cause an eternal universe to collapse into nothingness.

Since Einstein’s theory was sound, this only meant one thing: the universe was not eternal but had a beginning in the past.

Fr. Lemaître and Einstein would often discuss the issue while walking around the campus of Caltech. Einstein was skeptical at first, but in 1933 he proclaimed that Fr. Lemaître’s theory of an expanding universe was one of the most “beautiful theories he had ever heard.”¹⁷ Fr. Lemaître called his theory “the primeval atom,” but another physicist, Fred Hoyle, mocked it with the term “Big Bang.”

Hoyle believed that theories of the universe beginning to exist from nothing were “primitive myths” designed to inject religion into science. But the 1965 discovery of cosmic radiation from the Big Bang, in the words of Hoyle, “killed” his eternal, steady-state view of the universe.¹⁸ Fr. Lemaître learned that his theory of a universe with a beginning had been vindicated, three weeks before he died in 1966.

We can also show from reason alone that the past cannot be eternal and so the universe had a beginning.

Suppose your Aunt Mildred owns a flower shop and each day she has to count every flower before the shop opens. What if she has a hundred flowers? Piece of cake. A trillion? It may take a little longer. How about an infinite number of flowers? Well, the shop never opens because Mildred never finishes counting.

The universe is like the flower shop: the “OPEN” sign represents today, and the flowers represent every day in the past. If the past had an infinite number of days (or flowers), and every day has to happen or “be counted” before today can happen, then today will never happen, just as the flower shop will never open. But it is “today,” so time moved through every day before today. In order to do that, there could not have been an infinite number of days before today. Instead, there must have been a “first day,” or a beginning of time, and thus a beginning of the universe, that needs to be explained.

What about the argument’s first premise: Whatever begins to exist has a cause for its existence?

Some people say that even if the universe began to exist at the Big Bang, it could have come from nothing in the same way tiny particles have been observed in laboratories to come from nothing. But those particles do not

come into existence from pure nothingness. Instead, they come from a quantum vacuum, or a low-level energy field. As philosopher and physicist David Albert wrote:

Vacuum states—no less than giraffes or refrigerators or solar systems—are particular arrangements of *elementary physical stuff* . . . none of these poppings—if you look at them aright—amount to anything even remotely in the neighborhood of a creation from nothing.¹⁹

Virtual particles might come to be from fluctuating quantum fields, but it is impossible for anything (including entire universes) to come into existence from pure nothingness. Instead, the universe must have been created by a cause that exists beyond its boundaries of space and time.

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT

Here's another argument for the existence of God:²⁰

1. Our universe contains particular laws of nature that allow intelligent life to exist.
2. These laws are either necessary, were produced by chance, or were designed.
3. They are not necessary nor were they the product of chance.
4. Therefore, the laws of nature are designed.

In the past fifty years, scientists have discovered that even a slight variation in many of the laws of nature would have spelled disaster for life as we know it.

Consider the cosmological constant, which represents the strength of gravity in an empty vacuum of space. Once thought to be zero, this constant is actually fine-tuned to the 122nd power—a decimal point with 121 zeros and a one. This constant, or numerical value in a law of nature, could have been 10^{122} times larger than what is necessary for life to exist. Alexander Vilenkin wrote:

A tiny deviation from the required power results in a cosmological disaster, such as the fireball collapsing under its own weight or the universe being nearly empty. . . . This is the most notorious and perplexing case of fine-

tuning in physics.^{[21](#)}

To put this into perspective, the odds of getting this law of nature right by chance alone are the same as finding a randomly marked atom somewhere in the universe.

GET SOME PERSPECTIVE

- 10^{50} : The number of atoms in the planet earth.
 - 10^{80} : The number of atoms in the universe.
 - 10^{122} : The number of ways the strength of gravity in space could have been different and prevented life from existing.
-

Some people say that the universe is not fine-tuned for life because so much of it is hostile to life (such as the vacuum of space). But to say the universe is fine-tuned for life does not mean it is a place where the maximum amount of life will thrive. It only means that out of all the possible universes that could exist, it is much more likely that there would have been no life at all. The fact that our universe does accommodate life, regardless of how much or how little, against such incredible odds, requires an explanation.

So what explains these finely tuned laws of nature?

There's no reason to think the laws of nature must allow life to exist, since we can imagine them being different. We can rule out chance, because the odds of getting the laws of nature right are on par with winning fifty consecutive hands of poker in a row—with royal flushes every time!^{[22](#)} (Or one in 10^{300} , and that's a conservative estimate!)^{[23](#)}

This leaves design.

Like Alexander Vilenkin, the string theorist Leonard Susskind is a nonreligious scientist. But he says in his article, “Disturbing Implications of the Cosmological Constant,” that unless this constant's value was designed, “statistically miraculous events” would be needed for our universe to be life-permitting. He suggests that, in light of this, it is possible that an unknown agent set the early conditions of the universe we observe today.^{[24](#)}

But how do we know this “creator” is God?

Prior to my conversion to Catholicism I was a deist. I believed there was a generic “creator of the universe.” But the more I thought about this “god,” the more I realized that the creator must be God with a capital “G.” God must be

infinite and contain all perfections, including perfect love and goodness. Here's what led me to that conclusion . . .

WHY WE BELIEVE: A CREATOR

- Since the universe had a beginning, and the universe includes all space, time, matter, and energy, the universe must have an immaterial cause that exists beyond space and time.
- Science can only study physical objects in time; this means science can never study or naturally explain the cause of the universe.
- The universe contains elements of design and is finite, which means it must have been created by a personal cause and not a mindless force.

Why We Believe in God

In high school I only cared about God when I was in a bind on a math test and figured praying couldn't hurt. But most of the time I didn't think the creator of the universe cared about me. Frankly, I didn't care much about him or "it" either. My attitude began to change, however, one Thursday afternoon in my tenth-grade English class.

My teacher offered to grade one of my papers during lunch after my other classmates left, but a few minutes later a group of students came in with pizza—deliciously greasy, buttered-crust pizza from a local restaurant. It turns out the students were part of a Catholic youth group from a nearby church, and my English teacher was the sponsor of their club. I decided to stick around for the pizza and listen to their conversations about religion.

I attended a few more meetings, and I saw that my concept of God was too small to explain the universe. The people in the club helped me answer this question: "Even if the universe has a creator, how do we know that creator is the all-powerful, all-good God Christians worship?"

THE IDENTITY OF THE CREATOR

One way to establish the creator's identity is to rule out options that don't make sense. For example, some people believe the universe created itself, or that God is the universe. This is called pantheism, which comes from the Greek words for "all" (*pan*) and "God" (*theos*).

But if the universe came into existence from nothing, then it would need a cause outside of itself in order to begin to exist. Saying the universe "created itself" is like saying a person conceived himself or that Mark Zuckerberg got the idea to create Facebook from someone who sent him a Facebook message.

But how do you get from what the creator is not, like the universe itself, to what the creator *is*—in this case, an all-powerful, all-good God? One way is by understanding that there must be an *ultimate explanation* of reality.

Imagine you and a friend see a boxcar moving on a railroad track. You ask your friend, “What’s pulling that boxcar,” and he replies, “Another boxcar.” Satisfied? No, because that raises another question: “What’s pulling *that* boxcar?”

Your friend’s explanation wasn’t ultimate or final because it raised another question. Now, imagine this continues until your friend says, “Look, there’s just an infinite number of boxcars each pulling the one before it.” This may be an infinite explanation, but it’s not an *ultimate* explanation. That’s because it raises the question “Why is the train moving at all?”

Boxcars sit still unless something pulls them. It doesn’t matter if you connect one, two, or an infinite number of them together, they would all do the same thing: remain in place. The motion of the whole train remains unexplained until another entity is proposed: a railroad car that can move itself *and* pull other cars, or a locomotive.

In the same way, our universe’s existence can’t be explained by an infinite number of other universes that existed before the Big Bang. That wouldn’t explain why there are any universes at all instead of just nothing. Instead, another kind of entity must be proposed: a cause that gives existence to all things but receives existence from no thing. In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas defined God as *ipsum esse*, which is Latin for “existence itself.”

Asking, “If God created everything then who created God?” is like asking, “If the locomotive is pulling the train, then what is pulling the locomotive?” Not every train car needs to be pulled because some cars (like a locomotive) move themselves and explain the movement of all the other cars. Likewise, not everything needs a cause for its existence because one thing (God) is existence itself and explains the existence of all other things.

If God is unlimited being or existence itself, then that means God is *infinite*. That doesn’t mean God has an infinite number of thoughts or that he is extended over an infinitely long distance. Instead, something is infinite if it doesn’t have any limits. God is the act of being or existence itself and so nothing limits him or his attributes, which include, among other things:

Oneness: Since God has no limits, it follows that he lacks nothing. If there were more than one God, then both of those beings would limit each other in some way. Neither would be truly infinite and so both would be “gods” (or powerful creatures) rather than “God” (the all-powerful creator). If God is the infinite act of existence itself, then there can only be one God.

Omnipresence: God is not “present” everywhere by being identical to everything in the universe (as in pantheism). God is not dispersed through the universe like an invisible gas. Instead, God is present in the universe by sustaining and affecting every part of it. In short, there is no single place or time that contains God. Rather, all places and all times exist because God is existence itself. God perceives all of existence in one eternal “now,” and so he is present in it but not a literal part of it.

IS GOD AS SILLY AS ZEUS?

Beings like Zeus and Thor are gods with a lowercase “g.” They came from other gods, can die, are limited in power, ignorant of some things, and are usually immoral. They are not the unlimited, perfect act of being that explains reality, which we call “God.”

Even intelligent people who lived when these gods were popular didn’t believe in them. In his book *Metaphysics*, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle called gods like Zeus “myths.” However, he said the one, true God “is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God.”²⁵

Omniscience: Since God sustains all of existence, he is all-knowing, meaning that he knows all real and potentially real things. God knows not just everything that is true now, but also every real thing about the past (such as how many steps George Washington took in his lifetime) and every real thing about the future (such as whether you will finish reading this page).

But if God knows what I will do tomorrow, doesn’t that mean I’m not free to do anything different? No, because God’s knowledge of the future doesn’t *determine* the future. God isn’t in time like you or I. He exists *beyond* time and sees all of it in one eternal moment. Just as me looking at you in the present doesn’t stop you from sitting in a chair, God “looking” at you in the future from his position outside of time doesn’t stop you from sitting in a chair or doing anything else at that time either.

Omnipotence: Being omnipotent, or all-powerful, means that God has the power to do anything that is logically possible. God can do anything, but some combinations of words are nonsensical and so they don’t even count as “things” for God to do. For God to make a “square circle” or “a rock so heavy he can’t lift it,” or for him to destroy himself, would involve a logical contradiction. As a result, such things do not fall under the category of “anything that can actually be done,” and so they have nothing to do with God’s unlimited power.

God can do anything, but some combinations of words are nonsensical and so they don't even count as "things" for God to do.

Omnibenevolence: Think about all the bad things in life: cancer, serial killers, times when the fast-food restaurant messes up your order. What do all these bad things, from the trivial to the terrible, have in common? The answer: they're all missing something good.

Cancer is uncontrolled cell growth, so it lacks organization and health. Serial killers are people who lack empathy and love, which would keep them from committing their crimes. And a cheeseburger without cheese, well, that's just a hamburger. So how does this prove God is all-good?

You or I, or any other creature, will always lack something because we have limits. But God has no limits because he's infinite; therefore he lacks nothing. That doesn't mean every good and evil thing is in God because, as we've seen, evil is just the absence of good. Because evil is a lack of good, and God lacks nothing, it follows that God must be all-good.

All the perfections we see in the world have their source in God. God doesn't just have love, or beauty, or goodness: God *is* love, God *is* beauty, and God *is* goodness. But if God is all-good and all-powerful, then why is there so much evil and suffering in the world? It is to that important question we turn next.

IS GOD A "HE"?

Catholics refer to God as he, but that doesn't mean they think God is a literal male. The Catholic Church teaches: "By calling God 'Father,' the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children . . . [God] is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes. But the respective 'perfections' of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God."²⁶

WHY WE BELIEVE: GOD

- Reality requires an ultimate explanation that does not need to be explained by anything else, or what we could call unlimited "being" or "existence" itself.
- This ultimate explanation, or God, must be infinite. Since this cause lacks nothing, that means it alone contains all knowledge and all power.

- God must be all-good because, although he lacks nothing, evil is just an absence of good.

Why We Believe God Conquers Evil

People sometimes ask me, “What’s the hardest question you’ve ever answered about the Catholic faith?” They usually expect the question to be a very technical one, but the toughest questions I get tend to be simple and personal:

“If God is all good, why did he let my son die in a car accident?”

“If God is all loving, then why do children get cancer?”

“If God is all powerful, then why doesn’t he fix what’s wrong with the world?”

The problem of evil and suffering is one of the oldest arguments against the existence of God. If God is all-good and all-powerful, then evil should not exist. But evil does exist. Therefore, God must either be weak, evil, or nonexistent.

This argument is very powerful on an emotional level, but from a logical perspective it doesn’t prove that there is no God. In fact, objective good and evil provide evidence *for* the existence of God.

WHAT IS EVIL?

In order to understand how God could allow evil to exist, we have to understand what “evil” is.

Evil is not a thing that God created but an absence of good that God tolerates. Evil is a parasite that can’t exist without the good just as rust can’t exist without the metal it corrupts. Moral evils like rape or murder, for example, can’t exist without the good of people who can freely choose to do right or wrong. Natural evils, such as blindness and disease, can’t exist without good things like animals or plants.

Even though God didn’t create evil, we can still ask, “Why does God allow evils like murder or blindness to exist?”

Evil is a parasite that feeds off the good.

The short answer is this: it's okay to allow evil to exist if by doing so you bring about more good or prevent a greater evil. Humans allow the evil of car accidents, for example, because the regular use of streets and highways brings about a greater good. We could get rid of car accidents by getting rid of cars, but that solution would be worse than the problem we're trying to solve.

Similarly, God could get rid of moral evils like rape by getting rid of human beings or by taking away their free will, but the world would be a worse place if we were all robots. Our world wouldn't have goods like heroism, compassion, or even love, and humans would become the moral equivalents of programmable appliances.

But what about natural evils like disease or disasters that aren't related to our free will? These evils may help us develop virtues that could not exist if God eliminated every instance of suffering. For example, it's impossible for God to make someone be courageous if he is not in danger. They might also be necessary for us to live in a predictable world where God doesn't intervene every five seconds to protect us from pain.

Finally, as limited and fallible human beings, we are not in a position to say God cannot bring more good from any evil we encounter. Imagine a man who stands one inch away from the *Mona Lisa* and says, "This is a terrible painting! It's just some black splotches!" Of course, the man can't appreciate the beauty and goodness of the whole painting because he is only looking at one tiny part of it. In the same way, if we only look at suffering, we lose sight of the big picture, or how God can use suffering to create a good and beautiful world.

Consider the case of Nick Vujicic, who was born without arms or legs. As a child he was so depressed he tried to drown himself in a bathtub. However, after coming to know God and seeing that his life was not an accident, Nick was transformed. He now travels the world to share how God's love penetrates our deepest suffering. He writes, "Even in the worst situations that seem beyond our capacities, God knows how much our hearts can bear. I hold on to the belief that our life here is temporary, as we are being prepared for eternity."²⁷

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

For a person who is suffering, I understand why this answer may not be satisfying. “I don’t care!” she says. “If God loved me he’d take away this pain in my life. He wouldn’t let so many bad things happen to people!”

That’s a normal response to horrendous suffering, and that’s why I agree with my friend and colleague Jimmy Akin, who watched his wife die of cancer shortly after they were married. He says, “God doesn’t always give us reasons to explain our suffering, but he does give us ways to help us *endure* it.” One thing that helps me endure suffering is the realization that evil doesn’t make sense if there is no God.

A lot of people say evil is just “bad things” or “stuff that hurts,” but those definitions don’t work. Having a cavity filled or being punished for a crime you committed hurt, but they aren’t evil. In fact, these are examples of *good* medicine or *good* law enforcement. On the other hand, there can be instances of evil that don’t cause pain. A man who fantasizes about raping children but never acts out his fantasies doesn’t cause pain, but obviously the man has evil thoughts, not good ones.

Here’s a better definition: *Evil is what we experience when things are not the way they are supposed to be.*

Rape, murder, cancer, and other bad things are evil because they distort the way the world should be. Sex should be an act of love, not an act of violence. Cells should grow into body parts, not tumors. If evil refers to the way things are not supposed to be, then good must refer to the way things *are* supposed to be. But if things are supposed to be a certain way, then that means there is both a cosmic plan and a cosmic planner—a planner that many people call God.

AN ATHEIST ADMITS: MORALITY PROVES GOD EXISTS

The atheist philosopher J.L. Mackie wrote, “Moral properties constitute so odd a cluster of properties and relations that they are most unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary course of events without an all-powerful god to create them.”^{[28](#)}

Mackie believed in atheism so strongly that he denied the existence of objective moral truths, even though they seem real to most people. Perhaps we should accept that morality is real and that it comes from an all-powerful God who is goodness itself.

MEANT FOR MORE

Not only is the universe supposed to be a certain way, you and I are supposed

to be a certain way. When society embraces evils like genocide or slavery, the heroes are people who say it's better to do what's right than to accept what's popular. Martin Luther King Jr. even said, "A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God."²⁹

On the other hand, when we do something wrong, even if no one finds out about it, we feel guilty. We feel as if we've failed to live up to a standard of who we were meant to be. Most of us have told someone after we've hurt them, "I'm so sorry, that's not who I am." The reason we feel this way is because God gave us his moral law and wrote it on our hearts in the form of a conscience.³⁰ The Bible even teaches that people who don't personally know God still know him through their conscience (Rom. 2:14-16).

God gave us the moral law not so that we would feel guilty, but so that we could be truly happy. Imagine how wonderful life would be if no one lied, stole, held grudges, or used another person. Deep down we know we were made to be this kind of person, and suffering in this life can even help us achieve that goal. My favorite verse in the Bible puts it this way:

Accept whatever is brought upon you, and in changes that humble you be patient. For gold is tested in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. Trust in him [God], and he will help you; make your ways straight, and hope in him (Sir. 2:4-6).

GOD'S LOVE AMID NAZI HORROR

One of the inmates at the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz was a priest named Maximilian Kolbe. After a prisoner was thought to have escaped, the guards selected ten men to die in a starvation bunker in order to teach the remaining prisoners a lesson. The guards began to drag away a man named Franciszek, who dug his heels into the mud on the ground as he cried out, "My poor wife! My poor children!" At that moment, Fr. Kolbe stepped forward and said, "I am a Catholic priest. Let me take his place. I am old. He has a wife and children."³¹

The guards allowed Fr. Kolbe to take Franciszek's place, and over the next two weeks he comforted the other men who had been sentenced to die. Whenever the guards looked into his cell, Fr. Kolbe was either standing or kneeling in prayer. After all the other prisoners had died, the guards did not wait for Fr. Kolbe to starve to death. They instead injected his left arm with

carbolic acid and later cremated his remains.

Was this an example of evil that proves God does not exist?

The fact that what the Nazis did was objectively wrong proves there is a universal standard for morality that comes from a universal source of goodness, or God. Morality can't just be a survival mechanism that humans developed through the process of evolution, because some people feel compelled to do things that don't help our survival, like giving their life for a stranger. If we are all made in God's image, however, then that explains our desire to fight and even die for the dignity of someone else. In fact, Franciszek survived his time at Auschwitz and spent the rest of his life publicly speaking about Fr. Kolbe's heroism.

What gave Fr. Kolbe the strength to face such tremendous evil and suffering? As a priest, he devoted his life to imitating Jesus Christ, and Jesus was willing to do anything to save humanity from its sins, including dying a painful and humiliating death on a cross. Because Jesus is the divine Son of God, he was able to offer an infinite, perfect sacrifice of love that made up for the sins of the whole world. For those who believe in Jesus, this sacrifice means death is not the end of life, but rather the beginning of a new life with God in heaven. As he prepared for his execution, I wouldn't be surprised if Fr. Kolbe thought of this verse from the Bible: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55).

The problem of evil is not God's problem—it's ours.

If there is a perfect, objective standard of goodness, then whenever we choose evil we fall short of that standard. But the moral standards are not like the impersonal rules of mathematics. Morality is about people choosing between good and evil, so the perfect standard of morality must come from a perfect person, or God. This means that whenever we choose evil we separate ourselves from God, who is the Good itself.

Thankfully, by rising from the dead, Jesus showed that anyone who trusts in him would also share in his resurrection to eternal life. God will give everyone who follows Jesus the gift of grace, or the free offer of God's divine life. God's grace equips us to die to ourselves and, if necessary, to die for others.

But how do we know Jesus is God? How do we know he rose from the dead? What if those stories about Jesus are just stories? We have examined philosophical evidence for the existence of God, but now we must examine historical evidence that shows this God revealed himself to the world in the

person of Jesus Christ.

WHY WE BELIEVE: GOD CONQUERS EVIL

- Evil is an absence of good.
- A good being can allow evil to exist if he uses that evil to bring about greater goods.
- Objective good and evil only make sense if there is an objective moral law that comes from a perfect lawgiver, or God.

PART 2

JESUS

the
BIBLE

Why We Believe in Jesus

Many people believe that there is a God, or at least a “higher power” that created the universe. What they don’t believe is that they need to be religious in order to understand God. They ask, “Why should I be a part of a religion like Christianity with all of its rules and hypocrisy? I’d rather be spiritual instead of religious.”

SPIRITUAL VERSUS RELIGIOUS

First, it’s not bad to be spiritual. A spiritual person knows there’s more to reality than physical matter. He may even thank God for the beautiful world he created. But just as most people would love to meet their favorite artist, a truly spiritual person would want to know the artist who created the entire universe. This process of coming to know God and responding to his revelation is the essence of religion.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT RELIGION?

“If any one thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man’s religion is vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (James 1:26-27).

Hypocrisy, violence, and “long lists of rules” aren’t good reasons to reject organized religion, or any organized human activity. Imagine someone who said, “I don’t believe in organized sports. Sports leagues are filled with cheaters and the fans are obnoxious jerks. Some of them even cause violence when they riot after games. And there are so many pointless rules! I can be athletic on my own without playing or even watching organized sports.”³²

You can see how this compares to critiques of organized religion.

Just as it would be unfair to say all athletes are cheaters or all sports fans are jerks, it’s unfair to smear all Christians as hypocrites. The same is true when

it comes to claims of religious violence, like the idea that “religion is responsible for most wars.” Sports rioters don’t speak for all sports fans and violent religious people don’t speak for all the faithful. Most wars aren’t fought over religion but for non-religious reasons, such as securing land or natural resources.

What about religion’s supposedly pointless rules?

First, every culture has expectations for behavior that, if you wrote them all down, would be a rather long list of rules. Say “please” and “thank you,” put away your phone at dinner, take off your shoes when you come into the house, don’t dive into the shallow end of the pool, and so on. The NFL’s official rulebook is more than 300 pages long—and that’s just for one game! Since God loves us, and life is more complicated than table manners or football, we shouldn’t be surprised that God’s revelation would include a fair number of principles to help us be happy and spiritually healthy.

But how do we know these principles really come from God and weren’t just invented by human beings? How do we know which revelation or which religious rules to follow? We can find out by turning our focus to the most important person in all of human history.

THE JESUS QUESTION

When I was deciding whether or not I should be a Christian, I made sure to read about as many other religions as I could. At first it was overwhelming to compare the teachings of faiths like Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism to Christianity, but then I noticed they all had one thing I could compare: a teaching about Jesus Christ.

NON-BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus said Jesus was a wise man who Pontius Pilate condemned to the cross.³³ In the early second century, the Roman historian Tacitus said Christians received their name from “Christus,” who “was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius.”³⁴ Bart Ehrman, an agnostic scholar who is a leading expert on the Bible, wrote, “The view that Jesus existed is held by virtually every expert on the planet.”³⁵

Almost every major world religion has a teaching about the identity of Jesus. Jews say Jesus was a human teacher, Muslims say he was a prophet, and Hindus and Buddhists say Jesus was an “enlightened man.” They all say

basically the same thing: Jesus was a great man, but he's not God. If it turned out that Jesus was God, however, then even though these religions have some good teachings, I knew they couldn't be God's revelation. How could they if they failed to teach about the incredible moment when God became man in the person of Jesus Christ?

Isn't it amazing that even the name *Jesus Christ* can cause tension and discomfort? Some people say it's because that name reminds people of negative experiences they had at church or of violent Christian history. But the words "Christianity" or "Catholic Church" don't cause the same anxiety. I would argue that this name stirs strong feelings in people because the name itself has power. And the name of Jesus has power because the person who bears that name is God in human flesh and has infinite power.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

- **Jesus:** From the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which means "God saves."
 - **Christ:** From the Greek *Christos*, a title that means "anointed one" and has the general meaning of "savior."
-

Why should we believe such an incredible claim? Here are three reasons:

1. Jesus believed he was God, and we can trust him.

Jesus saw himself as more than a human prophet or teacher. For example, Buddha said, "Be ye lamps unto yourselves . . . hold fast to the truth as a refuge,"³⁶ whereas Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). Jesus also said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Another clue to Jesus' divine identity is that Jesus acted like God. For example, he forgave sins, which is something that only God has the authority to do (Mark 2:5-7). In John 20:28, Jesus' disciple Thomas addressed him as "My Lord and my God." Jesus did not correct Thomas, because what Thomas said was true.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

- Jesus is called God (John 1:1, Titus 2:13, Col. 2:9).
- Jesus acts like God (Mark 2:5-7, Luke 22:29, John 8:58-59).
- Jesus is honored like God (John 20:28, Phil. 2:5-11, Heb. 1:6-8).

In the Hebrew Bible, the name of God was considered so sacred it couldn't be pronounced. Even today many Jews spell the name "God" with a hyphen ("G-d") in order not to disrespect the name. But in John 8:58, Jesus used that sacred, unpronounceable name of God for himself.

He said that "before Abraham was, I am," implying that he eternally existed as God before Abraham, who lived thousands of years earlier. This act infuriated the Jewish leaders and motivated them to kill Jesus for blasphemy. But it wasn't blasphemous for Jesus to use God's name because he is God.

At this point someone might say, "I'll grant that Jesus wasn't a *liar* (since he was a good teacher), and he wasn't a *lunatic* (since he was a wise teacher), but maybe he was a *legend*. How do we know Jesus really said he was God? What if someone added that to the Bible in order to cover up a story about a merely human Jesus?"

This brings us to our next reason.

2. We can trust the New Testament documents.

There currently exist more than 5,500 copies of Greek New Testament manuscripts. There are also 15,000 copies written in other languages like Latin, Coptic, and Syriac. The first complete copy of the New Testament can be dated to within 300 years of the original documents.³⁷ Now, compare this to one of the most famous examples of ancient Greek literature: Homer's *Iliad*. It was written in the eighth century B.C. and, although a few fragments of the *Iliad* can be dated to within 500 years of Homer, the oldest complete copy was written in the tenth century A.D., or 1,800 years later!

Because there were so many copies of the New Testament in the ancient world (including thousands more that didn't survive to the present day), no single person or group could have gathered them all up and changed the story of Jesus. Also, unlike the biographies of people like Alexander the Great or Buddha, which were written centuries after those figures died, the Bible's descriptions of Jesus were written within a few decades of his death either by eyewitnesses or people who knew the eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry.³⁸

The biblical scholar F.F. Bruce put it bluntly: "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament."³⁹

3. The first Christians worshipped Jesus as God.

The earliest Christian writings show that they believed Jesus was the "image

of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), in whom the fullness of deity dwells bodily (Col. 2:8-9). Jesus had the “form of God” and a name to which every knee shall bend (Phil. 2:5-11). The Bible even calls Jesus “our great God and savior” (Titus 2:13).

When a second-century Roman governor named Pliny the Younger asked Christians to worship the gods of Rome, they refused. In a letter explaining this behavior to the Roman emperor, Pliny said that Christians “were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath.”

Remember also that the first Christians were converts from Judaism. For more than 1,000 years the Jewish people made themselves distinct from their pagan neighbors by refusing to worship an animal or a man as God. The Jews of Jesus’ time would never have believed Jesus was God unless his miracles, including his resurrection from the dead, proved it.

Since Jesus did prove he was God, we can trust him when he says, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26).

THE LITTLE FLOWER OF JESUS

In 1887, Henri Panzini was found guilty of a brutal triple murder in Paris. Fourteen-year-old Thérèse Martin, the youngest daughter of a devout Catholic family, heard he was unrepentant, and prayed night and day that he would not go to hell. She then received news that as Panzini’s head was placed under the guillotine, he reached out for a crucifix a priest was holding and kissed it three times. She wrote in her autobiography about God’s answer to her prayer:

“What an unmistakably sweet response! After this unique grace my desire to save souls grows each day . . . the thirst of my poor little soul increased and it was this ardent thirst he was giving me as the most delightful drink of his love.”⁴⁰

Thérèse desperately wanted to become a nun, but her local bishop refused because she was so young. A few months after Panzini’s execution, Thérèse met with Pope Leo XIII, and her request was granted. She called herself “the little flower of Jesus” because she thought of herself not as a magnificent rose, but as a simple wildflower blooming where God planted her.

Even though she died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four, her autobiography has inspired countless people to follow Jesus and glorify him in any circumstance, no matter how humble. Ironically, the simple wisdom of the Little Flower has had such a profound impact that, in 1997, Thérèse was declared a Doctor of the Church. Of the approximately 10,000 saints the Catholic Church recognizes, only thirty-six have been granted this title.

WHY WE BELIEVE: JESUS

- If God exists and revealed himself to man, then we should not be surprised he has given us a way to respond to him, or what some call “organized religion.”
- Jesus claimed to be God, and he is too good to be a liar and too wise to be a lunatic.
- Textual evidence shows that the Bible can be trusted and that Jesus’ claims to divinity were not a later legend that was added to the Bible.

Why We Believe in the Resurrection

The Bible says that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then the Christian faith is worthless (1 Cor. 15:17). However, if Jesus did rise from the dead, then we know Jesus can keep his promise to give everyone who follows him eternal life (1 John 2:25). But how can we know that Jesus really rose from the dead and that the Bible's description of this miracle wasn't just a story someone made up?

One way is by showing that the Resurrection is the only explanation for the events surrounding Jesus' death, events that almost everyone, including skeptics, agrees are historical. Even scholars who don't think the Bible is the word of God admit it is not completely made up. For example, skeptical scholar John Dominic Crossan denies that Jesus rose from the dead, but he says, "That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be."⁴¹

Similarly, the atheist New Testament scholar Gerd Ludemann said, "It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ."⁴² Ludemann doesn't think Jesus actually rose from the dead, but that the apostles experienced a hallucination instead. He does think, however, the apostles *thought* they saw the risen Jesus, and this fact of history needs to be explained.

As we examine the various theories put forward to explain these facts, you will see that only one theory explains: 1) Jesus' death by Crucifixion; 2) his empty tomb; 3) the post-Crucifixion appearances to the disciples; and 4) the disciples' willingness to die for their faith: the theory that Jesus actually rose from the dead.

THE SWOON THEORY

One way to explain these facts would be to posit that Jesus never really died. Maybe he just passed out on the cross and woke up in a tomb. Jesus then met up with the disciples who mistakenly thought he'd risen from the dead. But

even if Jesus somehow survived the Crucifixion, the apostles would never have thought he'd miraculously risen from the dead. Upon seeing his bloody, mutilated body, they would have thought Jesus had *cheated* death, not beaten it, and quickly gotten him medical treatment.

Besides, there is almost no chance Jesus could have survived being crucified. In 1986, the American Medical Association published a paper that analyzed ancient records of the Crucifixion.⁴³ It came to the conclusion that it would have been nearly impossible for Jesus to survive the intense flogging that ripped his skin apart as well as the asphyxiation brought on by being crucified.

THE TRASH THEORY

How do we know Jesus wasn't just thrown into an anonymous grave and was forgotten until the disciples imagined they saw him alive again? We'll discuss the theory that the disciples hallucinated in a moment, but let's first consider the idea that Jesus received a dishonorable burial and his body was abandoned in a common grave for criminals.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 prohibited the Jewish people from leaving a criminal hanging on a tree, so Jesus would have to have been buried immediately after he died on the cross. In fact, the only skeleton archaeologists have from a first-century crucifixion victim was found in a tomb, and not a random plot in a criminal's graveyard.⁴⁴ Jesus' burial in a tomb is also described in all four Gospels and corroborated in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

The Gospels say Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the council that condemned Jesus to death, buried him (though John 3:1-2 tells us Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but in secret, out of fear of the other Jewish leaders). If the Gospel writers had invented the story of Jesus being buried in a tomb, they would have given their leader an honorable burial at the hands of his friends and family.

This means we have good historical evidence that after the Crucifixion Jesus' body was placed in an identifiable tomb and simply didn't vanish in a common graveyard.

THE HALLUCINATION THEORY

Most historians agree the disciples thought they saw the risen Jesus. The

story of Jesus appearing to them was not a legend that developed centuries later, but was recorded by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:3-7). It is almost universally recognized among historians that Paul existed, we have the letters he wrote, and Paul knew the people who claimed to have seen the risen Jesus (Gal. 1:18-19). But could those experiences have just been hallucinations brought on by the terrible grief these men endured after Jesus was executed?

First, it is individuals, not groups, who almost always experience hallucinations. Multiple biblical authors confirm that groups of Jesus' disciples claimed to see him after his death (Luke 24:36-49, 1 Cor. 15:5-6). As psychologist Gary Collins writes, "By their very nature only one person can see a given hallucination at a time. They certainly aren't something which can be seen by a group of people."⁴⁵

Second, the theory that Jesus' depressed disciples hallucinated his resurrection doesn't explain why enemies of the Church came to believe in the Resurrection. The most famous example would be St. Paul, who was a Jewish leader who persecuted the Church until an encounter with the risen Christ moved him to join the "Jewish heresy" he had been persecuting. The best explanation for such a sudden conversion is that Jesus really did appear to Paul, just as he had appeared to his other disciples after his resurrection.

AN ATHEIST ADMITS: THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING

Antony Flew was at one time one of the most famous atheists in the Western world. His essay "Theology and Falsification" is one of the most widely printed essays in the history of twentieth-century philosophy. That is why it is remarkable that even he admitted in a debate with a Christian that "the evidence for the Resurrection is better than for claimed miracles in any other religion. It's outstandingly different in quality and quantity."⁴⁶

For example, the Qu'ran does not record Muhammad performing miracles, and the earliest sources about Buddha say he refused to perform miracles.⁴⁷ Both men are described as performing miracles only in legends written centuries after their deaths. This stands in sharp contrast to the accounts of Christ's resurrection that we find in the Bible. Unlike the stories of other ancient wonder-workers, these Christian accounts were written decades (not centuries) after the events they describe and are preserved in multiple sources.

THE EMPTY TOMB

Soon after a close friend of mine died a few years ago I had an incredibly

vivid dream that she was alive. If I had experienced her presence when I was awake, I would have checked her grave and, if it was empty, then I would know I hadn't been hallucinating. This brings us to the simplest argument against the hallucination theory: at any time the apostles could have visited Jesus' tomb to see if there was a body in it, which would prove that the Jesus they thought they saw was just a hallucination.

We've already seen that it is historically certain Jesus was buried in a locatable tomb. The Gospels tell us that on the Sunday after the Resurrection a group of women discovered the tomb was empty. But why should we believe Jesus' tomb was empty and that the authors of the Gospels didn't make this up? There are actually three reasons and they can be summarized in the acronym JET.⁴⁸

First, the disciples preached the empty tomb in the city of Jerusalem. If the tomb were not empty, enemies of the early Church could easily have taken the body out of the tomb and proven Jesus did not rise from the dead.

Second, the earliest enemies of the Church agreed that Jesus' tomb was empty. Matthew's Gospel says the Jewish leaders of his day (about forty to fifty years after the Crucifixion) believed Jesus' body was stolen from the tomb (Matt. 28:11-15). The second-century Christian writer St. Justin Martyr also says that the Jews of his time believed Jesus' body was stolen.⁴⁹ I'll explain in a moment why that theory fails, but notice that these critics didn't say that the disciples merely hallucinated—they had to explain why Jesus' tomb was empty.

Finally, the Gospels include the testimony of women discovering the tomb. In Jesus' time a woman's testimony was considered to be as reliable as that of a child or a criminal. A collection of ancient Jewish wisdom called the Talmud says, "The words of the Torah should be burned rather than entrusted to women."⁵⁰ The Jewish historian Josephus said that a woman's "levity and boldness" made her testimony unreliable.⁵¹ If the Gospel authors had invented the story about Jesus' tomb being found empty, they would have used trustworthy characters like Peter or John. The embarrassing detail about women discovering the empty tomb was included in the story simply because that's what really happened.

WAS JESUS' TOMB REALLY EMPTY?

J—Apostles preached in **Jerusalem** where an empty tomb could be disproved.

E—**Enemies** of the faith agree the tomb was empty.

T—The embarrassing **testimony** of women is unlikely to have been made up.

THE FRAUD THEORY

Is it possible the disciples stole Jesus' body and then told people their Messiah had risen from the dead? It's not impossible, but this theory seems extremely unlikely. That's because there's no evidence of any crack in the conspiracy—no record of a single Christian admitting after the fact that it was all a hoax. Moreover, fraud is normally committed for personal gain; the only thing the disciples had to gain from their fraud was persecution and death. Since people don't knowingly die for a lie, we can be confident Jesus' disciples really believed in the Resurrection they preached to others.⁵²

Of course, people throughout history have died for many things they thought were true. Muslim suicide bombers die for the Islamic faith because they believe God will reward them in heaven, but their sincerity does not prove Islam is correct. The key difference, however, is that Muslim suicide bombers are not in a position to know if Islam is false (they never interacted with the Muslim prophet Muhammad, who lived centuries before them). The apostles, on the other hand, were in a position to know whether Christianity was false by examining Jesus' tomb and seeing if his body was still there.

There is no chance they were all deceived or that they all chose to die painful deaths in order to deceive others. What's more likely is that Jesus' resurrection really happened and gave them the courage to share this good news in the face of persecution. They knew that even if they were to die through Christ they would live forever. We, too, can have eternal life if we trust in God's promises and choose to be baptized into the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3-5).

"I'M READY TO BE A CHRISTIAN"

I remember staying up one night in high school watching debates on the Internet between Christians and atheists. One question kept bothering me: How did it all start? Christianity didn't begin with one person having visions of God that no one else could confirm. It began with the public proclamation that a man had been raised from the dead. It was accompanied by historical evidence, like the empty tomb that proved this was not a hoax or a hallucination. That night I realized Jesus was really alive and he was the God "out there" I had vaguely thought about for so many years. I then bowed my head, opened up my palms, and prayed, "Jesus, if you're real, help me believe. I'm ready to be a Christian."

WHY WE BELIEVE: THE RESURRECTION

- Even skeptics admit that Jesus was crucified, buried, his tomb was found empty, his disciples saw him after his death, and they were willing to die for that truth.
- Other explanations, like hallucination or fraud, only explain some of these facts.
- The most plausible explanation for all these facts is that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

Why We Believe in the Trinity

When I was walking home after school with my friend Adam I told him about what I'd been discussing with the students at the Catholic youth group.

I said, "So we were talking about Jesus and they think he's God."

"You mean the God who made everything?"

"Yeah."

Adam looked down to ponder this and then said, "But I thought they believed Jesus was the Son of God, not God."

"They do," I replied, "but I'm not sure about the difference. I'll look into it."

Then I hit the books, especially *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This is basically the manual that explains what Catholics believe. According to the *Catechism*, Christians believe in one God who exists as a Trinity of three divine persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It says, "The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire" (CCC 253).

But how can there be *one* God who is *three* persons? Isn't that a contradiction?

WHAT IS THE TRINITY?

In order to understand the Trinity, we must understand three key words: being, person, and nature.

A *being* is an existing entity, or "*that* something is"; a *person* is a rational individual or "*who* someone is"; and a *nature* refers to "*what* something is." For example, you exist so you are a kind of being (in this case, an animal). You are also a person who has a human nature, that is, you have the capacity to act in distinctly human ways. So you are a *being* who is one *person* and possesses one human *nature*.

DEFINING OUR TERMS:

- **Being:** An existing entity (*that* something is).
- **Person:** A relation or individual capable of reasoning (*who* something is).
- **Nature:** The traits and ends of a certain being (*what* something is).

God is one being that exists as three persons who each fully possess the divine nature.

So how does this relate to God? Christians do not believe God is *one person* with infinite attributes. That belief, held for example by Jews and Muslims, is called unitarianism. Christians believe that God is *one being* who exists as *three persons*, each of whom fully possess the divine *nature*. Christians are not unitarians but trinitarians. They believe that because there is only one God, and the Bible shows that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, this means the one God must be three persons. Matthew 28:19 hints at this reality when it says that Jesus commanded baptism in the *name* (not names) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT GOD?

Many people think the Holy Spirit is just some kind of force, but the Bible describes the Spirit speaking in sentences to people, proving he is a person (Acts 13:2). The Bible also says the Holy Spirit will guide us “into all the truth” (John 16:13), and that the Spirit alone comprehends the thoughts of God (1 Cor. 2:11). Who else but God can know all truth or comprehend God’s thoughts?

The apostle Peter shows us that the Holy Spirit is God when he asks Ananias, who lied and held back money due to the apostles, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? . . .

You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3-4).

Not only is the Holy Spirit a person who can be lied to, but lying to the Holy Spirit is the same as lying to God, because the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity.

The Trinity can’t be grasped if we think of “beings” and “persons” as the same thing. If we recognize that there are beings that are zero persons (such as rocks and trees) and there are beings that are one person (such as humans and angels), then we see there could be a being that is three persons, or God.

GOD OR A GOD?

One way to understand the Trinity is to look at religions that misunderstand it. For example, when I was speaking to two Mormon missionaries, we discussed whether they believed Jesus was God. They said, “Absolutely, Jesus is the Son of God.” I then asked them if they would pray to Jesus. They

became visibly uncomfortable and said, “No, Mormons don’t do that.”

The reason Mormons don’t pray to Jesus is because they believe the Trinity is a collection of three separate divine beings, not three persons in one being, and that the Father created the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁵³ They even believe Jesus is our “eldest brother,” and if we follow what the Mormon Church teaches we will become “gods,” just like Jesus and the Father “became gods” at one point in the past.⁵⁴ This, of course, contradicts the evidence we discussed earlier, which shows that the Creator of the universe must exist without limit and so there can be only one infinite God. It also contradicts the testimony of Scripture, which says there is only one God (Deut. 4:39, Isa. 45:5, John 17:3).⁵⁵

After hearing this, I told the missionaries, “I appreciate that you’re trying to share your faith, but I love being a Christian. The reason I could never become a Mormon is because I would miss the relationship I have with Jesus Christ. I love praying to Jesus and knowing he isn’t ‘a god’ but, as the apostle Thomas said, ‘My Lord and my God’” (John 20:28).

Jehovah’s Witnesses also deny the Trinity because they believe there is only one “true” or “mighty God,” who is the Father. They say Jesus is just “a god” the Father created, because Jesus said, “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). But when Jesus said this he meant the Father was greater than him in *position* since, at that time, the Father gloriously reigned in heaven while Jesus humbly ministered on earth.

When God the Son became man, he was made “lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:9), but Jesus was not an exalted man or some kind of angel. (Jehovah’s Witnesses think Jesus and Michael the archangel are the same person.)⁵⁶ Hebrews 1:4-6 says Jesus has

become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs. For to what angel did God ever say, “Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, “*Let all God’s angels worship him*” (emphasis added).⁵⁷

Angels don’t worship other angels; they worship only God. But if the son of a dog is a dog, and the son of man is a man, then the son of God must be God. If there is only one God, then God must exist as more than one person that can be worshipped: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

CAN GOD DIE?

Some people ask, “How can Jesus be God if he prayed to God? How can Jesus be God if he died on a cross?”

Saying that “Jesus is God” means Jesus is a divine person, one of three divine persons who belong to the Trinity. The Father and the Holy Spirit did not become man, but the Son did. In doing so Jesus remained one divine *person*, with a fully *divine nature*, but he also assumed an additional *human nature*. Therefore, whatever is true of Jesus is also true of God, even if it may sound strange at first. For example, since Jesus died on the cross, it is also true that God died on the cross, because Jesus is God.

Of course, God did not *go out of existence*, but that is not what it means to die. Death occurs when a living being’s parts are separated into their basic elements, or they decompose. Jesus’ soul was separated from his body, so Jesus, the God-man, died. Jesus did not go out of existence, but his soul did exist apart from his body. However, through Jesus’ divine nature, he was able to reunite his body and soul and raise himself from the dead.⁵⁸ God died on the cross, but he also rose from the dead to glorious eternal life.

Likewise, when Jesus prayed to God he wasn’t talking to himself—he was praying to the Father. Since God is more than one person, there is no contradiction in God the Son becoming man and praying to the Father who is in heaven. God is our father by adoption (Rom. 8:15), but Jesus’ father by nature (John 1:18), since both the Father and the Son are equally divine. In fact, the Bible tells us that the Jews wanted to stone Jesus because he “called God his Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18).

ONE PERSON OR THREE PERSONS?

Another misunderstanding occurs when people say that the Trinity is like one man being a father, husband, and son at the same time. This is not trinitarianism, but the heresy of modalism, which says that the Trinity is made up of three aspects or *modes* of God, each of which has a different role. This is very popular among so-called “Jesus-only” Christians or Oneness Pentecostals.

They say there is only one God and God manifests himself as the Father at some times, and the Son and Holy Spirit at other times. But this doesn’t make sense of Scripture passages that describe Jesus talking to the Father (John

17), saying he will return to the Father (John 14:12), or that the Son will send the Holy Spirit in his place (John 14:16-17, Acts 2:33).

Since my husbandness and fatherhood can't talk to each other, this means the Son of God is not a "role" God plays. He is a person who God is, or the person of Jesus Christ. God is not one person but one being that is three coequal, coeternal persons.

A PAGAN INFLUENCE?

Some Jehovah's Witnesses say that the first Christians did not believe in the Trinity. They say when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, pagan converts brought this heretical idea about God with them. But a hundred years earlier the ecclesial writer Tertullian said, "The unity is distributed in a Trinity. Placed in order, the three are the Father, Son, and Spirit."⁵⁹

Although it is a mystery ultimately beyond our human reason, the doctrine of the Trinity is not just some piece of theological trivia. Indeed, this doctrine demonstrates one of God's most amazing attributes: that he is *love* (1 John 4:8).

God is not a solitary being who has existed by himself from eternity past. As love itself, God is a relationship of persons who eternally give and receive love among one another. God's love is so unending that he desires to share it with each of us, a point Jesus made when he said, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

WHY WE BELIEVE: THE TRINITY

- The Bible teaches that there is only one God.
- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate persons who share the same divine nature—that is, each of them is God.
- Therefore, God is one being that exists as a Trinity of three coequal, coeternal divine persons.

Why We Believe in the Bible

Once when I was speaking at a university, a young man asked me, “How can you believe in the Bible when it contradicts science and says you’ll be stoned to death if you break a law in the Old Testament? It even commands people to kill each other. How can you believe in all that stuff?!”

I looked at him for a moment and then said, “Those are great questions and I’m happy to explain my answer to each one of them, but the main reason I believe in the Bible is because Jesus believed in the Bible. If a guy can walk out of his own tomb, then I trust his judgment.”

I then told him that the Bible is the word of God, but God allowed many different human authors to write the seventy-

three different books that make up the Bible. Those authors only wrote what God wanted, but God allowed them to use their own styles and human perspectives in what they wrote. We must take that into account and not read the Bible as if it were an instruction manual God wrote and shipped down from heaven.

The Bible is fully divine in its inspiration and fully human in its composition, free from error and written so we might be saved from sin.

I then spent a few minutes sharing with this young man the “big picture” of what the Bible teaches.

CREATION AND COVENANTS

The Bible (named from the Greek word for “book”) is a collection of books and letters, written over a period of centuries, that describe God’s revelation to man and man’s response to that revelation. Also called Sacred Scripture, the Bible is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, teaches that God created the world and

made human beings in his image. The beginning of this book is written in the style of epic poetry, so its description of the creation of the world in six days is not scientific in nature. For example, Genesis describes how God created “light” on the first day, but created the sun, the thing that even ancient people knew makes the light, on the fourth day. This can be explained if the author of Genesis was using poetic, nonliteral language instead of a chronological, literal description of the Creation.

An example of a true, nonliteral description would be when a parent explains to his child that babies “come from a seed daddy gives to mommy that grows inside the mommy’s tummy.” That’s a true description; it just shouldn’t be taken literally. The Catholic Church teaches that the book of Genesis also truthfully describes the Creation of the world, but it does so through the use of nonliteral language.⁶⁰

Genesis also describes how our first parents rebelled against God and how God progressively revealed himself to human beings in order to save humanity from sin and death. These include the formation of *covenants*, or sacred pledges of loyalty, which God made with men like Noah and Abraham, the latter of whom became the father of God’s chosen people, Israel. In Egypt, archaeologists discovered a large granite stone from the year 1208 B.C., called the Merneptah Stele, that refers to the existence of Israel.⁶¹ God decreed that this group of people, named after Abraham’s grandson, would bless the entire world.

A PEOPLE BECOMES A NATION

The next books of the Bible describe how Israel was enslaved in Egypt until God formed a covenant with Moses. Moses led Israel to freedom out of Egypt and into the desert, where they wandered for forty years. They eventually settled in the land God had promised them, in an area called Canaan (located in modern-day Israel).

During this time God gave his people laws that modern readers sometimes don’t understand, such as rules that forbid eating pork or mixing fabrics. Only some of these laws (like “Thou shall not murder”) are binding on believers today. The other “purity” laws like “Thou shall not eat pork” were only meant for ancient Israel, but they served an important purpose.

They were designed to keep Israel separate from other nations that might tempt them to worship pagan gods who practiced incest, promoted

prostitution, and demanded child sacrifice by fire. The laws that forbade Israelites from eating certain foods or wearing certain clothes helped them see that they should not imitate other nations, but remain unique and “pure” in their worship and love of God.

Here’s an analogy to help understand this distinction. When I was a child, my mom gave me two rules: hold her hand when I cross the street and don’t drink from the bottles under the sink. The purity laws were like mom’s hand-holding rule. They helped the Israelites understand the discipline God’s law requires and protected them from destructive pagan influences (just as hand-holding protected me from careless drivers). Moral laws, on the other hand, deal with things that are always harmful, like murder or adultery, and so Christians still follow them even though they are found in the Old Testament (just as I still follow the rule “If it’s under the sink, don’t drink!”).

A NATION GOES TO WAR

The first five books of the Bible, which Jewish people call the Torah and scholars call the Pentateuch, end with the death of Moses and the installation of his successor, Joshua. The book of Joshua continues Israel’s story and describes how Israel contended with the hostile tribes that inhabited the land of Canaan (the Canaanites). Some of these descriptions include commands to wipe out entire nations, which are very disturbing. But since God gave us our lives, he alone has the authority to end them at any time and in any way. This would include using his chosen people to carry out a judgment against a culture known for its unparalleled wickedness and evil.

ANCIENT CHILD SACRIFICE

God’s people were forbidden to offer human sacrifices, but such sacrifices were common among the Canaanites, which resulted in God’s judgment against them. Here’s how one ancient historian describes these sacrifices:

“There stands in their midst a bronze statue of Kronos, its hands extended over a bronze brazier, the flames of which engulf the child. When the flames fall upon the body, the limbs contract and the open mouth seems almost to be laughing, until the contracted [body] slips quietly into the brazier.”⁶²

It could also be the case that the language used in these texts is exaggerated, nonliteral “warfare rhetoric.” This kind of language is akin to saying your favorite sports team “destroyed” or “massacred” its opponents. Ancient battle

accounts also use this language, which can be seen in the Merneptah Stele. It says that Israel was “laid waste and his seed is not,” even though the nation of Israel continued to exist for several centuries after the stele was erected.

The fact that the book of Judges describes these same hostile nations existing after they were “utterly destroyed” shows that other books of the Bible, like Joshua, probably used exaggerated language. The author’s point was that Israel could not absorb any part of the nations they fought, but must “utterly destroy them.” Tolerating any part of such a destructive culture would result in God’s people falling into the same kind of wickedness.

A KINGDOM AND AN EXILE

Along with books that tell the story of God’s people, the Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible) contains literature that teaches God’s people wisdom and right living, such as the book of Proverbs. It also contains collections of prayers and hymns, like those found in the book of Psalms. Other books in the Old Testament include stories that were written to teach people how to have faith in God, such as the story of Job, who kept his faith in spite of tremendous suffering.

The remaining historical books of the Old Testament, for example, Samuel and Kings, describe how Israel became a kingdom and then a divided kingdom. The most famous of Israel’s kings was David, who most people remember as the shepherd boy who defeated the Philistine giant, Goliath, with a sling and a stone. David’s son Solomon succeeded him, but Solomon’s inability to keep God’s people from falling into idolatry and wickedness led to the nation being divided into northern and southern kingdoms.

It’s important to remember that just because the Bible *records* God’s people being wicked or doing evil things doesn’t mean God *recommends* those practices. These evil actions are what motivated God to send a series of prophets to urge his people to repent and turn away from their sins. The prophets told the people to care for widows and orphans (who were at risk of starving to death), not to worship idols, and not to engage in wicked sexual behavior.

Unfortunately, these prophetic reforms were either ignored or did not last. As a result, other nations conquered the northern and southern kingdoms and took God’s people into captivity. The final historical books of the Old Testament reveal how God’s people were freed from captivity and returned to

their promised land. Unfortunately, even after their return, God's people suffered under the rule of foreign powers like the Greeks (and later the Romans). Through all of this they patiently awaited the Messiah: a savior promised in Scripture who would restore God's kingdom.

"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." —St. Jerome, a fourth-century Bible scholar who produced the world's most popular Latin translation of the Bible

A SAVIOR IS BORN

The New Testament is the story of that Messiah, Jesus Christ (Christ is a title for the Messiah that means "anointed one"). The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tell us that Jesus existed as the Son of God before the creation of the world and that he became man in order to save humanity from its sins. The Gospels end after Christ's resurrection, when he commissioned his followers to become apostles (a Greek word that means "messenger"). Their mission was to share the good news of Christ's resurrection and offer of salvation with the entire world.

The Acts of the Apostles is the book that picks up where the Gospels leave off. (Its author also wrote the Gospel of Luke.) It describes how after Jesus ascended into heaven, the Church he created flourished in spite of the persecution it faced from Jewish and Roman leaders. The rest of the New Testament includes a collection of letters the apostles sent to various communities in order to teach and encourage them to keep the Faith.

The last book of the Bible is Revelation, which contains visions of God's heavenly kingdom. Revelation also contains prophecies about the end of the world and describes how God will conquer evil. After God's victory he will gather his people, both the living and the dead, to himself, in order to share glorious, eternal life with him.

THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

It's a circular argument to say the Bible is the word of God because the Bible says it is the word of God. That assumes what you're trying to prove. But we've seen that even if we assume the Bible is a collection of human documents, they still provide historical evidence that a man, Jesus Christ, rose from the dead.

They also show that Jesus established a Church built on apostles to whom he

gave spiritual authority (Matt. 16:18-19, Eph. 2:20). Christ told the apostles, “He who hears you, hears me” (Luke 10:16). But this authority did not end when the apostles died. The successors of the apostles, the future bishops of the Church, inherited this spiritual authority and were able to declare the Bible to be the word of God.

This is not a circular argument, in which an inspired Bible is used to prove the Church’s authority and the Church’s authority is used to prove that the Bible is inspired. Instead, it is a “spiral argument,” in which the Bible is assumed to be a merely human document that records the creation of a divinely instituted Church.⁶³ This Church then had the authority to pronounce which human writings also had God as their author. The great fourth-century theologian St. Augustine reached a similar conclusion when he said, “I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church.”⁶⁴

WHY WE BELIEVE: THE BIBLE

- The Old Testament describes God’s creation of the world, man’s fall into sin, and the restoration of God’s family through his chosen people, Israel.
- The New Testament describes the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God who expanded God’s family to include the whole world by dying on a cross and atoning for humanity’s sins.
- Christ established the Catholic Church to be the custodian of his revelation, and from it we have the Bible that Christians read today.

Why We Aren't Bible-Only Christians

After I became a Christian I struggled with whether I should keep attending a Catholic Church. As I sat in church and watched incense rise up from the altar, I felt an urge to stay and be part of what felt like a sacred mystery. On the other hand, there were a lot of Catholic beliefs that I could not find in the Bible, which made me think they were just man-made traditions.

I eventually decided that it didn't matter which church I joined so long as I only believed in what the Bible taught. But then I ran into a roadblock: I couldn't find a single Bible verse that said everything I believed had to be found in the Bible. And the more I studied history, the more I saw it was the *Catholic Church* that gave us the Bible.

If I believed in God's word, then why wouldn't I join the Church that gave us this word in the form of Sacred Scripture?

THE UNBIBLICAL IDEA OF *SOLA SCRIPTURA*

In the sixteenth century, Christians like Martin Luther and John Calvin opposed what they thought were “man-made traditions” of the Catholic Church. Because of their protest against the Church, they came to be known as the *Protestant Reformers*. However, instead of reforming the Catholic Church, they rejected the Church's authority and replaced it with the idea that all Christian teaching, or doctrine, should come from the Bible alone. This principle later came to be called *sola scriptura* (Latin for “by Scripture alone”).

But if all doctrine is supposed to come from the Bible, then where does the Bible teach the doctrine of *sola scriptura*?

It's true that Revelation 22:18 warns that “everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.” But John, the author of Revelation, was just prohibiting the addition of words to the visions he received. He was not denying that the word of God exists outside the Bible, or even outside his

own revelation.

The passage most often cited in defense of *sola scriptura* is 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”⁶⁵

Catholics agree that all Scripture is inspired by God. Scripture is also useful, but this doesn’t mean Scripture is the *only* thing that helps us teach the Faith or grow in holiness. We also need an active prayer life and advice from other mature Christians. In 2 Timothy 2:21, Paul says that if Timothy cleanses himself from bad influences he will be a vessel ready for “any good work.” Of course, that doesn’t mean that if Timothy stays away from bad influences he will automatically know every essential doctrine of the Faith.

The Bible teaches that Scripture is *one* tool that equips us to do good works, but it is not the only tool that makes us ready for that task. In fact, the Bible teaches that God’s word is not restricted to the written word alone.

THE NECESSITY OF TRADITION

The first Christians didn’t learn their faith from the Bible because none of the books of the New Testament had been written yet. This is evident in Paul thanking the Corinthians for “maintain[ing] the traditions even as I have delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2), and instructing his disciple Timothy, “what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Paul thanked the Thessalonians for accepting his preaching, not as human words, but as the very words of God (1 Thess. 2:13). In his second letter to this community he told them to “stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thess. 2:15).

TRADITION AND TRADITIONS DEFINED

- **Ecclesial tradition:** The rules and customs taught by the Church that aid us in worshipping God. These include styles of worship or rules that can change when it is most helpful for the Body of Christ.
 - **Sacred Tradition:** The word of God in oral form that Jesus and the apostles entrusted to the Church and that do not change. These include basic doctrines of the Faith and ways of living out the Faith in every generation.
-

Sacred Tradition is not the same as customs that can change over time, like manner of dress or style of worship (or “tradition” with a lowercase “t”).⁶⁶ Tradition (with a capital “T”) refers to the word of God that is “handed on” or “delivered.” It does not change even though our understanding of it grows over time, in the same way our understanding of Scripture grows over time.

In the second century, St. Irenaeus wrote, “While the languages of the world are diverse, nevertheless, the authority of the tradition is one and the same.” He also asked his readers, “What if the apostles had not in fact left writings to us? Would it not be necessary to follow the order of tradition, which was handed down to those to whom they entrusted the churches?”⁶⁷

TRADITIONS OF MEN?

Some Christians object to the idea of Sacred Tradition because they believe Jesus condemned it. They refer to the time when Jesus told the Jewish leaders, “For the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God” (Matt. 15:6). But in this case Jesus was condemning a particular man-made tradition that was contrary to one of God’s commandments. Specifically, Jesus criticized the tradition of applying a sacrificial offering of money, called *korban*, to the Temple instead of using the money to support one’s elderly parents. This tradition contradicted the Fourth Commandment, which says, “Honor your father and mother.”

However, Jesus did not reject religious tradition as a whole because he told his disciples to obey the Jewish leaders because they sat on something called “Moses’ seat” (Matt. 23:2-3). This was not an actual chair but a term that referred to a Jewish tradition, not found in Scripture, about the Jewish leaders’ teaching authority. In fact, prior to his Ascension into heaven Jesus never commanded the apostles to write anything down. Instead, their mission was to preach the gospel, and the word of God continued to be passed down in oral tradition even after the New Testament was written.

THE BIBLE’S TABLE OF CONTENTS

The clearest example of a Sacred Tradition that both Catholics and Protestants accept is the canon of Scripture. The word “canon” comes from a Greek word that means “rule,” and refers to the Church’s official list of inspired writings. You can find this list in the table of contents of every

Catholic or Protestant Bible. The canon of Scripture was first declared in Rome in A.D. 382 and was later defined at two Catholic councils in North Africa (Hippo in A.D. 393 and Carthage in A.D. 397).⁶⁸

A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN ADMITS: THERE'S A PROBLEM

“The problem with contemporary Protestants is that they have no doctrine of the Table of Contents. With the approach that is popular in conservative evangelical circles, one simply comes to the Bible by means of an epistemological lurch. The Bible ‘just is,’ and any questions about how it got here are dismissed as a nuisance. But time passes, the questions remain unanswered, the silence becomes awkward, and conversions of thoughtful evangelicals to Rome proceed apace.”⁶⁹ —*Protestant theologian Douglas Wilson*

However, if you are a Christian who denies the authority of the Catholic Church, then by what authority can you say Christians must accept the canon of Scripture found in today’s Bibles?

Some say it’s just obvious the books of the Bible all belong there and we don’t need any Church to prove they do, but is it really so obvious? Paul’s letter to Philemon doesn’t teach any specific doctrine, and the third letter of John doesn’t even mention the name of Jesus Christ. Conversely, other writings that were popular in the early Church, like the *Didache* or the letter of Clement, are not in the canon of Scripture.⁷⁰

Others say “the church” (with a lowercase “c”) determined the canon, but we aren’t obligated to follow what any church might teach today. But if that group of early Christians did not have Christ’s authority, then we have no reason to continue following their doctrinal decisions, including their decisions about the canon. The Protestant theologian R.C. Sproul famously suggested that the best we can say is that the canon of Scripture is “a fallible list of infallible books.”⁷¹ This means any Christian who feels moved by the Holy Spirit could claim the table of contents in the Bible needs to be revised, or even that some portions of the Bible should be removed.⁷²

In fact, 500 years ago Martin Luther and other Protestant Reformers did just that. Luther called the letter of James “an epistle of straw” because it contradicted his theology, so he moved it to the back of the Bible. Even though Luther and the other Reformers kept the letter of James, they removed books, called the *deuterocanonicals*, from the Old Testament. These books,

like Sirach, Tobit, and Maccabees (among others), were part of the Bible Jesus used and were considered inspired Scripture in the early Church.⁷³ One reason the Reformers rejected books was because they teach Catholic doctrines like the existence of purgatory and the need to pray for the dead.⁷⁴

SCRIPTURE, TRADITION, AND THE CHURCH

Catholics agree we should not believe anything that contradicts God's word, in either its written form (the Bible) or its oral form (Tradition).

If an alleged tradition contradicts Scripture, then the tradition must be of human—small “t”—rather than divine—capital “T”—origin. But if a document that claims to be Scripture (such as a forged or heretical gospel) contradicts Sacred Tradition, then it, too, must be of human origin. God speaks through the written word, but as we've seen, only through Sacred Tradition can we know which writings are the word of God and which ones are not.

Sacred Tradition also protects the Church from *false interpretations* of the Bible. My Protestant friends would sometimes debate other religious people who denied basic Christian doctrines like the deity of Christ. They would point out Bible passages that they say proved Jesus is God, only to hear the other person say, “Yes, but that's not how *I* interpret those passages.” I thought it was ironic when one of my Protestant friends said, “But my interpretation of these passages is the same one Christians have held for 2,000 years!”

This was a perfect example of how God's word speaks in Scripture through the written word (or what the Bible says), but also through oral Tradition (or teachings about what the Bible *means*). But whose tradition should we look to for guidance on interpreting the Bible?

My Protestant friends couldn't even agree among themselves on what the Bible taught concerning issues such as whether babies should be baptized or if salvation can be lost. It's no wonder that in his second letter St. Peter taught, “no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20).

St. Vincent of Lerins made this point in the fifth century when he noticed that heretics could cite Scripture just as well as the faithful. This meant that another authority was necessary to settle disputes about what Christians should believe. This authority could be none other than the Church Christ

founded, or, as Vincent wrote, “The rule for the right understanding of the prophets and apostles should be framed in accordance with the standard of ecclesiastical and Catholic interpretation.”⁷⁵

WHY WE BELIEVE: THE BIBLE AND TRADITION

- The Bible never teaches that God’s word is confined to the written word or that everything Christians believe is explicitly described in the Bible.
- The Bible teaches that God’s word exists in oral form as Sacred Tradition.
- One tradition that both Catholics and Protestants believe in is the canon of Scripture.

PART 3

The
CHURCH

the
SACRAMENTS

Why We Belong to the Catholic Church

When I was considering joining the Catholic Church, I sat down with some of my non-Catholic friends to see if they could talk me out of my decision. They were Christians, but they didn't consider themselves to be "Protestants." Instead, they called themselves Evangelicals or just "Christ-followers." Regardless, their response to my decision to become Catholic surprised me.

One of the girls said, "As long as Catholics believe in Jesus then I don't think it's a big deal." Another chimed in, "I mean, we're never going to know which church is the right church or even if there is such a thing, so why worry?"

That answer didn't satisfy me so I asked them, "Don't you wonder if one of the churches that exists today can be traced back to the Church Jesus founded? Don't you wonder which church *Jesus* wants us to join?"

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

My question was met with a collective shrug and a simple recommendation that I just "believe in Jesus," but that wasn't good enough for me. How did my Evangelical friends know we only have to believe in Jesus to be saved? What does it *mean* to believe in Jesus? Do we have to be baptized to believe in Jesus? Do we have to receive Communion? If I stop believing in Jesus will I lose my salvation?

I wanted the answers to these questions so I decided to study what the very first Christians believed. These were the believers who lived just after the apostles. If there was one church I wanted to belong to, it was their church.

In the time of the apostles believers were called "Christians," but the Church was not called "the Christian Church." It was simply referred to as "the Church," as is evident in Luke's description of what Paul and Barnabas did in

the city of Antioch. He said, “For a whole year they met with the Church, and taught a large company of people; and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians” (Acts 11:26).

A few decades later, St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote a letter to Christians who lived 600 miles away, in the coastal city of Smyrna (located in modern Turkey). He said, “Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”⁷⁶

WHO STARTED YOUR CHURCH?

- Calvary Chapel, 1965: Chuck Smith
 - Mormon church, 1830: Joseph Smith
 - Disciples of Christ, 1809: Thomas Campbell
 - Baptist church, 1609: John Smyth
 - Presbyterian church, 1560: John Knox
 - Calvinist church, 1536: John Calvin
 - Lutheran church, 1517: Martin Luther
 - Eastern Orthodox church, 1054: Eastern Patriarchs
 - Catholic Church, 33: Jesus Christ
-

The word Catholic comes from the Greek word *kataholos*, which means “according to” (*kata*) “the whole” (*holos*). Christ’s Church is called the Catholic Church because it is the same Church regardless of where or when it is found. The Church is the same because it contains the fullness of God’s eternal plan of salvation for the human race.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

St. Paul says the Church was built on “the foundation of the apostles” (Eph. 2:20) and is “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church, and that the apostles, especially Peter, would have authority over it (Matt. 16:18-19, 18:17). If the apostles alone had the authority to speak on Christ’s behalf (Luke 10:16), then that authority would be lost once they all died. Fortunately, God gave the apostles the ability to pass on their spiritual authority to worthy successors.

After the death of Judas (the apostle who betrayed Jesus), Peter proclaimed that Judas's position among the apostles would be transferred to a worthy successor (Acts 1:20). St. Paul even warned Timothy, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands" when he appointed new leaders in the Church (1 Tim. 5:22). The apostles did all this to make sure their authority to "bind and loose" (Matt. 18:18), that is, to determine Church teaching and practice, would be passed on to their successors.

In A.D. 110 St. Ignatius of Antioch told his readers, "Follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery [or priests] as you would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop."⁷⁷

THE FOURTH POPE SPEAKS

At the end of the first century, the fourth pope, Clement, reminded the Christians in the city of Corinth about the reality of apostolic succession, saying,

Our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife for the office of bishop. For this reason, therefore, having received perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those who have already been mentioned and afterward added the further provision that, if they should die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry.⁷⁸

AN OLD BABY PHOTO

"How can today's Catholic Church with all of its traditions and rituals be the same humble Church we read about in the New Testament?" It's a good question, but it's sort of like asking, "How can that fully grown man be the same little boy whose diaper had to be changed decades earlier?" In both cases the body being described grew and developed over time without becoming a different kind of being.

The man, for example, has some things he did not have as a baby (like whiskers). But he also has many things he did have as a baby. This includes the same DNA that guides his growth and gives him features like "his father's nose," which can be seen in his old baby photos. In the same way, the Catholic Church, which St. Paul calls the Body of Christ (Eph. 5:23), has the same "DNA" as the Church of the first century: the word of God. This word is transmitted both through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and you can see its effect in one of the Church's "old baby photos."

One particular “photo” comes from the second century, when St. Justin Martyr wrote about how when Christians gathered to worship, they “offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized person, and for all others in every place.” After that, they “salute one another with a kiss,” the presider at the service takes bread and wine and does the following:

[He] gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen.^{[79](#)}

Justin’s description corresponds to the prayers of the faithful, the exchange of peace, the offering of bread and wine, and the “great amen” that are still said at Catholic services today. Justin goes on to say that the bread and wine at Mass are not mere symbols of Christ’s body and blood, but are instead “the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.” This doctrine, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, is one the Catholic Church still teaches and defends (see chapter 14 for more).

Here are some other examples of what the first Christians believed. Can you see the resemblance to what Catholics believe today in these other “baby photos”?

- Submit to the bishop as you would to Jesus Christ. —*St. Ignatius, A.D. 110.*^{[80](#)}
- Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life. —*Tertullian, A.D. 203.*^{[81](#)}
- The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. —*Origen, A.D. 248.*^{[82](#)}
- Of how much greater faith and salutary fear are they who . . . confess their sins to the priests of God in a straightforward manner. —*St Cyprian, A.D. 251.*^{[83](#)}

IS CATHOLICISM PAGAN?

Some people claim that in the late fourth century, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, non-Christians converted purely

out of convenience. These new converts brought with them “man-made rituals” that corrupted Christ’s Church. But as we’ve seen, doctrines like the priesthood, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the sacrament of confession were believed long before the fourth century and can even be traced back to what Jesus and the apostles taught.

It’s true the Catholic Church took what was good in non-Catholic religions and used it to glorify God, but all Christians do this. The custom of exchanging rings at a wedding, for example, was first practiced in ancient Egypt and is not described in the Bible. Of course, the meaning of the ritual does not contradict what the Church teaches about marriage. In fact, the never-ending nature of rings symbolizes the permanence of marriage, which is why even Protestants usually have this “pagan” custom at their wedding services.

If Catholic customs like burning incense, lighting candles, and singing chants contain unforgivable infusions of “paganism” into the Church, then Protestant churches that use fog machines, stage lights, and popular music in their services would be just as pagan. Pope St. John Paul II taught that using cultural elements in service of the gospel is not wrong as long as such elements “in no way compromise the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith.”⁸⁴

WHO WILL SHOW ME?

The book of Acts describes how a servant of the queen of Ethiopia was puzzled when he read the prophecies of the Old Testament.⁸⁵ Fortunately, the apostle Philip came along and asked the servant, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The servant replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” Philip then showed the servant how the Old Testament’s promised Messiah was Jesus Christ. The apostle then baptized the servant in a nearby pool of water (Acts 8:26-40).

Many people feel just as confused as the Ethiopian servant when they read the Bible. St. Peter even warned his readers that there are confusing passages in Scripture, whose meaning some people twist to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). If that’s true, then wouldn’t Jesus make sure someone like Philip was still around today to help people understand what they’re reading in God’s word? The Bible does not say there should be hundreds of competing denominations that each have different interpretations of the Bible. Instead, it

says, “There is one body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:4-5).

The *Catechism* teaches that through baptism all Christians are “put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church” (CCC 838). What Catholics desire is for their non-Catholic friends to have a *perfect* communion with Christ’s Church. That way every Christian can fulfill Jesus’ prayer that all his followers “may be one,” just as he and the Father are one (John 17:11).

ST. AUGUSTINE ON BEING CATHOLIC

St. Augustine was the fourth-century bishop of Hippo who became one of the most famous theologians in the history of Christianity. Many Protestants even seek to follow his teachings, as is evident in John Calvin’s remark that “Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with all fullness and satisfaction to myself out of his writings.”⁸⁶ In his letter to the heretic Mani, however, Augustine revealed what keeps him in the Catholic Church.

“The succession of priests, from the very see of the apostle Peter, to whom the Lord, after his resurrection, gave the charge of feeding his sheep (John 21:15-17), up to the present episcopate, keeps me here. And last, the very name Catholic, which, not without reason, belongs to this Church alone, in the face of so many heretics, so much so that, although all heretics want to be called ‘Catholic,’ when a stranger inquires where the Catholic Church meets, none of the heretics would dare to point out his own basilica or house.”⁸⁷

WHY WE BELIEVE: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- Jesus established a Church built on the apostles that included a hierarchy, or sacred order, that included deacons, priests, and bishops.
- Only the Catholic Church can trace its authority back to the apostles and their immediate successors.
- The Catholic Church maintains in its current teachings the ancient doctrines of Christ, the apostles, and the early Church.

Why We Have a Pope

Let's travel forward in time about ten years after my conversion to the Catholic faith. It was 4:45 a.m., and my wife and I were standing in a subway station outside of Rome waiting for the train to arrive. The handful of people on the platform couldn't help but stare at my wife pacing back and forth in her long, flowing wedding dress. Both of us were wearing our wedding attire because newly married couples are allowed to sit in a special section at St. Peter's Basilica, where they have the chance to meet the pope.

We were told that the pope usually just waves to newlyweds after his morning address, which is why we were shocked when a security official pointed to the middle of the platform, in front of an audience of 50,000 people, and told us, "You go there to see pope."

My stomach felt as if it was full of pins and needles, and when the pope finally met us I was at a loss for words. My wife skipped past the formalities and gave him a hug, which the pope's security detail was not happy about (though the pope seemed to have a good laugh over it).

Even our non-Catholic friends get excited when they hear we met the pope, but why is the pope so important to Catholics? The answer is because Christ has entrusted the pope, the bishop of Rome, with the office he first entrusted to St. Peter—to be the pastor of his entire Church.

This man is called "pope" because that word comes from a Latin word for "father" (*papa*). Just as St. Paul said he became a father to the Christians in the Greek city of Corinth (1 Cor. 4:15), the pope is a spiritual father to all believers. He has been entrusted with the same responsibilities Christ gave to Peter, which include spiritually feeding Christ's flock of believers (John 21:15-19) and determining doctrine and practice for Christ's Church (Matt. 16:18-19).

PETER THE LEADER

Peter's role as "chief apostle" is evident in the fact that he is mentioned more

than any other apostle, often speaks for the whole group, and is placed first in almost every list of the apostles (Matt. 10:2). We know these lists were made in order of importance because Judas is always listed last.

The book of Acts also describes Peter's unparalleled leadership in the early Church, including his authority to make a binding declaration at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). As the non-Catholic scholar J.N.D. Kelly put it, "Peter was the undisputed leader of the youthful church."⁸⁸

PETER LEADS THE CHURCH

- The first apostle to see the risen Jesus (Luke 24:34, 1 Cor. 15:5)
 - Preached the first sermon and received the first converts (Acts 2:14-41)
 - Performed the first healing in the Church age (Acts 3:6-10)
 - Excommunicated the first heretic (Acts 8:18-24)
 - Received the first revelation about the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48)
 - Gave the first binding declaration of dogma for the entire Church (Acts 15:7-11)
-

Jesus also gave Peter his name, which had previously been Simon. This is important, because in the Bible when God changes someone's name he also changes that person's destiny. For example, Abram's destiny was to be the father of the Jewish people, so God changed his name to Abraham, which means "father of many nations." The name "Peter" means "rock," which meant Peter's destiny was to be some kind of rock or foundation. Jesus revealed just what kind of rock he would be after Peter correctly identified Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said:

Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:17-19).

In the ancient world, cities were surrounded by giant walls and could only be entered through a massive gate. The ruler of the city was given a large key to this gate, which was also a symbol of his authority over the city. When Jesus gave Peter "the keys of the kingdom," he was alluding to a passage in the Old Testament book of Isaiah that describes how Hezekiah, the king of

Israel, gave Eliakim the authority to oversee his entire kingdom. According to Isaiah 22:22, Eliakim would have “the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

Jesus told the apostles, “as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you” (Luke 22:29). Like any responsible Jewish king, Jesus selected one person, the apostle Peter, to oversee this kingdom as his prime minister.⁸⁹ As the Protestant scholar Craig Keener writes in his commentary on Matthew, “[Jesus] plays on Simon’s nickname, ‘Peter,’ which is roughly the English ‘Rocky’: Peter is ‘rocky,’ and on this rock Jesus would build his Church.”⁹⁰

IS THE POPE THE ANTICHRIST?

The strangest and most persistent attacks on the papacy are claims that the pope is the Antichrist or the beast from the book of Revelation. But these claims are easily rebutted.

1 John 2:22 says that the Antichrist “denies that Jesus is the Christ,” but no pope has ever done this.⁹¹ Likewise, Revelation 17 speaks of a beast that sits on seven mountains and persecutes the holy ones of God, but the Catholic Church doesn’t persecute Christians and it doesn’t sit on “seven mountains.” Vatican City rests on Vatican Hill, which lies across the river from the seven hills of Old Rome, where Christians were crucified and fed to the lions.

Scholars agree that the “beast” in Revelation probably symbolizes a Roman emperor like Nero, or the Roman Empire as a whole because of its violent persecution of the Church during the first century.

IS THE POPE INFALLIBLE?

The doctrine of papal infallibility teaches that the pope has a special grace from God that protects him from leading Christ’s Church into error. Most Protestants would admit that St. Peter was at least infallible when he wrote his first and second letters, because they’re in the Bible. Catholics simply believe this kind of protection was given to Peter and each of his successors, none of whom led the Church into error.

But why should we believe the pope is infallible?

Matthew 16:18 says the “powers of death” (some translations say “gates of hell”) will never prevail against the Church, so it makes sense that the pastor of Christ’s Church would never steer it into hell by teaching heresy. Luke 22:31-32 records Jesus telling Peter, “Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not

fail.” The original Greek in the passage reveals that Satan demanded to sift “you all,” or all the apostles, but Jesus prayed for “you” in the singular sense, just for Peter, that his faith would not fail.⁹²

It’s true that Christ once called Peter “Satan” for trying to stop the Crucifixion (Matt. 16:23). He also knew Peter would later deny him at his trial, but God doesn’t call the perfect—he perfects the called. That’s why Christ prayed that once Peter “turned again” from his sins, he would lead and strengthen the other apostles (Luke 22:32).

The grace of infallibility does not keep the pope from sinning (even gravely). For example, St. Paul rebuked Peter for refusing to dine with Gentiles so as not to offend his fellow Jews (Gal 2:14), but Paul didn’t deny Peter’s authority or show he had taught error.⁹³ He just reminded Peter that he needed to live up to his own teaching. As the Protestant theologian Thomas Schreiner puts it, “Peter and Paul still agreed *theologically*. Paul rebukes Peter because the latter acted *against* his convictions.”⁹⁴

Infallibility also doesn’t mean the pope will have the right answer to every problem facing the Church. The gift of infallibility only keeps the pope from officially leading the Church into heresy. Some Church Fathers, such as St. Cyprian of Carthage, criticized the pope’s decisions; but even Cyprian believed the pope could not lead the Church astray.

“The throne of Peter . . . from whom no error can flow.” —St. Cyprian of Carthage, A.D. 256⁹⁵

PETER’S SUCCESSORS, THE BISHOPS OF ROME

Even if Peter did have infallible authority over the early Church, how do we know this authority was passed on to his successors?

In the first century, Peter’s third successor, Clement, intervened in a dispute in the Church of Corinth. He warned the Corinthians they would be “in no small danger” if they disobeyed him, thus demonstrating his authority over non-Roman Christians. St. Ignatius of Antioch referred to the Roman Church as the one that teaches other churches and “presides in love” over them. In fact, the writings of Pope Clement (A.D. 92-99) and Pope Soter (A.D. 167-174) were so popular that they were read in the Church alongside Sacred Scripture.⁹⁶

In A.D. 190, Pope Victor I excommunicated an entire region of churches for

refusing to celebrate Easter on its proper date. A French bishop named St. Irenaeus thought this wasn't a good idea, but neither he nor anyone else denied that Victor had the authority to do this. Indeed, Irenaeus said of the Church at Rome, "It is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church on account of its preeminent authority."⁹⁷ The fifth-century Council of Chalcedon read aloud a letter from Pope Leo I that defended the traditional doctrine of Christ's divinity. Once they finished, the bishops in attendance shouted, "Peter has spoken through Leo!"

Christ will always be the king of his kingdom, but like any good king, he appoints a prime minister to oversee that kingdom. Just as Israel's chief steward Eliakim was considered "a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah" (Isa. 22:21), the bishop of Rome is a father, or pope, to those who belong to Christ's Church. He has inherited the keys to the kingdom and is faithfully charged with watching over it until the king returns in glory.

A POPE STANDS UP TO THE BARBARIANS

Popes not only protect the Church from spiritual threats, but physical ones as well. As the Roman Empire collapsed in the fourth century, barbarian hordes invaded from the north, burning villages to the ground and slaughtering people they didn't sell into slavery. The most fearsome of these barbarians was Attila the Hun, whose savage reputation for violence motivated the Romans to call him "the Scourge of God."

In A.D. 452 Attila's army gathered to attack the city of Rome, but Pope Leo I rode out to Attila, who was also on horseback. A historian who wrote about their meeting a few years later said that Attila "was so impressed by the presence of the high priest that he ordered his army to give up warfare and, after he had promised peace, he departed beyond the Danube [river]."⁹⁸

WHY WE BELIEVE: THE POPE

- Jesus gave Peter special authority as the leader of both the apostles and the early Church.
- This authority was passed on to Peter's successors, the bishops of Rome.
- Peter and his successors enjoy the gift of infallibility, which keeps them from leading the Church into heresy.

Why We Have Priests

Have you ever noticed in movies that when the heroes have to face something demonic or paranormal they almost always call in a Catholic priest to help? Even nonreligious people recognize a kind of ancient, transcendent mythos or power that radiates from a priest. But what they sense isn't a superstitious kind of magic. Rather, it's the grace of God that permanently changes a priest's soul and equips him to fight sin and even demonic forces that would attack Christ's Church.

St. Paul taught that Christ's Church would have a hierarchy composed of deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13); presbyters, from where we get the English word "priest" (1 Tim. 5:17); and bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7). When I first read these passages I asked myself, "Which churches today have deacons, priests, and bishops?" It must be in one of those churches, I imagined, where I would find the original church Christ established on Peter and the other apostles.

WHERE ARE PRIESTS IN THE BIBLE?

In the Old Testament, God's people had a three-tiered priesthood that has been fulfilled in Christ's Church. First, the people as a whole were called a *kingdom of priests*, because their holy conduct would allow them to intercede on behalf of an unbelieving world (Exod. 19:6). Some of them, like the Levites, were part of the *ministerial priesthood* and offered sacrifices on behalf of the people (Exod. 28:41). Finally, there was the *high priest*, who approached God's sacred dwelling among the people once a year to offer a sacrifice that made up for the peoples' sins as a whole (Exod. 28:1, Lev. 21:10).

Since the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70, the Jewish sacrificial priesthood no longer exists; the Christian priesthood has now taken its place.

Just like in the Old Testament, St. Peter says every Christian belongs to a *holy priesthood* (1 Pet. 2:5), and the letter to the Hebrews says Jesus Christ is

our new *high priest* (Heb. 4:14). Unlike all the other high priests, Christ was divine and without sin, so his sacrifice on the cross was able to take away the sins of the world. It is this single sacrifice that Catholic priests re-present in the form of the Eucharist (see also chapter 14). Through their service these men become the fulfillment of the *ministerial priesthood* of the Old Testament. The letter of James also refers to priests ministering to the community by offering sacraments that healed the sick and forgave sins:

Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects (James 5:14-16).

Today this sacrament is called the *anointing of the sick* and is also part of the *last rites*, or the prayers and sacraments given to those who are in danger of dying. One of the sacraments the priest offers, if the person is conscious and alert, is one last chance to confess his sins. Notice that James 5:16 says we ought to confess our sins “to one another,” which in this context would have included the elders or priests of God’s Church.

WHY DO I HAVE TO CONFESS MY SINS TO A PRIEST?

Why can’t I just confess my sins directly to God? Why do I need to go to confession (or what is also called the sacrament of reconciliation)? Here’s my answer: Because God loves us and has given us an amazing way to experience his forgiveness.

The Church teaches that God has given us sacraments so that we can have physical moments when we experience God’s grace flooding into our hearts. Think of grace as God’s free gift of life that takes away sin and makes us more and more like him. God could just give us grace in an invisible way after we say a certain prayer, but he knows we are made of matter, and matter, well, matters!

Why is it more special to get a thank-you letter in the mail than a thank-you message by email? Why is an embrace a more powerful way of saying “I love you?” It is because in these actions we experience love and gratitude

with our senses as well as our mind. God understands this and that's why he gave his Church *sacraments*, or outward, physical signs of our inward reception of God's grace.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper), Confession, the Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders.

There are seven sacraments, each of which has a specific way they are to be performed (the form) and a specific material that must be used (the matter). The form of baptism includes saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." The matter is the water that covers the person and is the physical means by which their sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).

The sacrament of confession includes several prayers in the form, but the matter is the priest himself. His physical presence and voice is the channel through which God's grace enters the sinner's heart and reconciles him to God. St. Paul even said, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

A PRIEST SAVES SOULS ON THE TITANIC

In 1912, a British priest, Fr. Thomas Byles, booked a ticket on the *Titanic* to New York to serve at his brother's wedding. He was on the upper deck when the ship struck an iceberg and stayed behind to hear as many confessions as he could before the ship sank.

One eyewitness said, "Father Byles could have been saved, but he would not leave while one [passenger] was left . . . After I got in the boat, which was the last one to leave, and we were slowly going further away from the ship, I could hear distinctly the voice of the priest and the responses to his prayers."⁹⁹

Fr. Byles's brother and family searched diligently for him among the survivors, but he is believed to have perished at sea; his body was never recovered. The current pastor of the church where Fr. Byles served nearly a century ago has begun the process of seeking a formal recognition of Fr. Byles's sainthood.¹⁰⁰

A priest doesn't forgive sins apart from God any more than a Protestant minister who baptizes someone makes that person a Christian apart from God. A priest has the same authority to forgive sins as the apostles, to whom Jesus said, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23).

In order for the apostles to know a person's sins should be retained, for example, if the person wasn't actually sorry for them, they would have to know what those sins were. Barring some kind of revelation from God, this knowledge could only come from a person confessing his sins out loud. As St. Cyprian of Carthage put it in A.D. 251, "with grief and simplicity confess this very thing to God's priests, and make the conscientious avowal, put off from them the load of their minds, and seek out the salutary medicine even for slight and moderate wounds."¹⁰¹

WHY ARE PRIESTS UNMARRIED MEN?

The Catholic Church selects men to be priests because it always strives to imitate Jesus Christ. Even though many women served in Jesus' ministry, he did not call any of them to be apostles. Instead, Jesus left the Church a dogma, or an unchanging part of divine revelation, that only men can be called to stand "in the person of Christ" (Latin, *alter christus*) and serve Christ's bride the Church (Eph. 5:22-33).¹⁰²

The requirement that priests be unmarried, or celibate, is a *discipline* rather than an unchanging *dogma*. St. Peter was married (Matt. 8:14), though we don't know if his wife was alive when he became the leader of the Church, since the Bible never mentions her.¹⁰³ Christ did not give the Church a single teaching on this question, so the Church is free to propose disciplinary rules that best serve the Body of Christ.

In the Eastern Catholic Church, married men can become priests but unmarried priests can't later get married. In the Western Church exceptions have been made for married priests who convert from other religions, like Anglicanism, but most priests are celibate.

These priests have followed a tradition given by St. Paul that says the unmarried are able to completely focus on pleasing the Lord without being hindered by the responsibility of caring for a family (1 Cor. 7:32). Paul affirmed the goodness of marriage, but he also wished that all could be celibate like him. He even described how some widows in the early Church took vows of celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7, 1 Tim. 5:12).

WHY DO CATHOLICS CALL PRIESTS "FATHER"?

If Jesus says in Matthew 23:9 to "call no man your father," then why do Catholics call priests

“father”? For the same reason St. Paul called himself a father to the Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:15), it is an appropriate title for the shepherds of Christ’s flock.

Jesus also says in Matthew 23:8–10 to call no man teacher or “master,” yet Protestants often call their seminary-

educated pastors and theologians “doctor,” a word that literally means “master” or “teacher.”

Jesus was only warning his followers against inflating the pride of the Jewish leaders and elevating their authority above God’s authority. He was not forbidding the existence of any spiritual fathers or teachers that he might call to humbly serve his Church.

Other biblical examples of living a celibate life can be seen in the prophets Elijah and Jeremiah, as well as our Lord, who said, “There are eunuchs [people incapable of sexual intercourse] who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:12). *The Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* says that in this verse Jesus was encouraging voluntary abstinence from sexual relations, “not by self-mutilation but by self-denial.”^{[104](#)}

Some people say that if priests were allowed to marry there would be less sexual abuse in the Church and more men would want to be priests. But many pedophiles are married men, and being single doesn’t cause someone to become attracted to children. Moreover, the priesthood isn’t a job whose requirements are changed in order to attract candidates. The Bible says that when Jesus saw the crowds of people following him

He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:36-38).

Priests are those men who answer God’s call to go out into the world and lead lost souls back to the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

WHY WE BELIEVE: PRIESTS

- Catholic priests are the New Covenant’s fulfillment of the Old Covenant’s ministerial priesthood.
- Christ only called men to be apostles, and so the Catholic priesthood only includes men.
- Traditionally, priests in the Western Church have been unmarried so they

can fully imitate Christ and serve his bride, the Church.

- Catholic priests have been given authority from Christ to forgive and retain sins, which is made manifest in the sacrament of confession.

Why We Go to Mass

A few years ago, some friends of ours bought a homemade-donut machine. You just poured batter into it and in one minute a bunch of mini-doughnuts rolled off its little conveyor belt. When they told their five-year-old son about it his eyes lit up and he exclaimed, “That’s amazing! Now we don’t have to go to Church anymore!”

Like this little boy, some people go to church for the “donuts.” They might be literal donuts, but usually the “donuts” are some other nonreligious reason that gets them up earlier than usual on Sunday. They may feel the need to please a family member or spouse. Or they might go because that’s just what their family always did. As they get older they might only keep that tradition going for major holidays like Easter and Christmas. But for many people, the “donuts” stop being worth it and they no longer go to Church. They might say:

“Catholic services are boring. I don’t feel like I’m getting anything out of it.”

“They’re always asking for money.”

“The music is dreadful and the homily is even worse.”

When people ask me why I go to church every Sunday, I tell them it’s because no matter how boring the homily, no matter how terrible the music, no matter what else is happening, the bread and wine on the altar at every Catholic Mass becomes the body and blood of our savior Jesus Christ. I go because that bread and wine don’t just symbolize Jesus; they actually become his body, blood, soul, and divinity. Jesus is there, not just every Sunday, but every day, ready to be received by the faithful so they can have eternal life.

THE NEW PASSOVER

The first time I visited a Catholic Church, the person who invited me

explained that the services are called “Mass” because the name comes from the Latin word *missa*, which means “to send forth.” Catholics attend Mass so they can be equipped and “sent forth” to share the gospel with the entire world. When that friend told me about the “sacrifice of the Mass,” however, I stopped a few feet from the church entrance.

“Sacrifice? You’re not going to kill a goat up there on the altar, are you? Because I’m not sure I’m ready for that.”

He laughed and said that the sacrifice would be the bread and wine brought up to the altar, called the Eucharist, which comes from a Greek word that means “thanksgiving.” The *Catechism* says, “For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch” (CCC 1324).

Pasch means “Passover” and is a reference to an event the Jewish people still celebrate. When they were enslaved in Egypt, God told his people to kill a lamb that was without blemish or defect so that the angel of death that was sent to punish the Egyptians would “pass over” their homes (Exod. 12:43-51). Christians also have a lamb who was sacrificed so that spiritual death would pass over them: Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist said that Jesus was “the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), and St. Paul said, “Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). The Passover lamb in the Old Testament had to be a male, without blemish, and his legs could not be broken (Exod. 12:5,46). Christ, our Passover lamb, is male, without sin (Heb. 4:15), and during the Crucifixion his legs were not broken (John 19:33). Finally, the Passover was not complete until the lamb was eaten, and so the “Passover” that Christians still celebrate must be completed in the same way.

FOOD INDEED, DRINK INDEED

Since Jesus did not want us to be cannibals, he gave us his body and blood to consume under the miraculous form of bread and wine. He said:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of

me (John 6:53-57).

The original Greek in this passage communicates an even more powerful message than what we read in English. Earlier in John 6, Jesus uses *phago*, a generic word for eating, but in these verses he switches to *trogo*, which means “to gnaw or chew.” Likewise, Jesus uses the word *sarx*, which refers to the soft, fleshy substance that covers our bones, and not *soma*, which just means “body.” Jesus’ word choice, as rendered in the Greek, shows that he is talking about real, physical chewing and eating of his very flesh.

“My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” —*John 6:55*

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to two of his followers on a road to the city of Emmaus. He hid his identity from them until after he blessed and broke bread for them to eat. Jesus made it clear that after his resurrection all of his disciples would not see him in a human form, but that he would instead be “known to them in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35).

When I told one of my non-Catholic friends that I went to Mass he scoffed. “Don’t you think it’s weird that Catholics believe they’re eating Jesus’ actual flesh and blood?” I then showed him John 6:53-57 and asked him what he thought Jesus meant when he said, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” My friend read the passage, closed the Bible, and while shrugging his shoulders said, “It’s just a metaphor.”

But that explanation didn’t sit well with me.

It’s true Jesus used metaphors to describe his mission. He said of himself, “I am the door” (John 10:9) and “I am the vine” (John 15:5), but in those cases Jesus didn’t also tell us to “oil his *true* hinges” or “water his *true* roots.” In addition, no one rejected Jesus for using metaphors involving the door or the vine, but when Jesus said that a person must eat his flesh to have eternal life, the Bible tells us that “many of his disciples drew back and no longer walked with him” (John 6:66).^{[105](#)}

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS BELIEVED IN THE REAL PRESENCE

St. Paul told the Corinthians that whoever “eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:27). Just sixty years later, St. Ignatius of Antioch said, “The Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness, raised up again.”^{[106](#)} J.N.D.

Kelly admits that in the early Church, “the consecrated bread and wine were taken to be, and were treated and designated as, the Savior’s body and blood.”^{[107](#)}

IT STILL LOOKS LIKE BREAD AND WINE!

At the Last Supper before his Crucifixion, Jesus offered the disciples bread and wine. Jesus did not say, “This bread *contains* my body” or “I am *in* this wine.” Jesus simply said of the bread, “Take, eat; this is my body” and of the wine “Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant” (Matt 26:26-28). The Church teaches that when they are consecrated at Mass, the substance of these things changes into the body and blood of Christ although the appearances of the bread and wine remain.

A substance is the “metaphysical core” of an object that unites all of an object’s appearances into a single entity. For example, humans look very different as they grow from being infants and become adults. In fact, many of our cells die and are replaced by new cells, but through all these changes we remain the same person. That’s because we possess an invisible, underlying *substance*, or a metaphysical core that unites our parts. This unity is only broken at death, when the soul leaves the body and we begin to decompose.

At Mass the bread and wine do not *transform* into the body and blood of Christ, because their form, or how the bread and wine look and taste to us, does not change. Rather, the *substance* of the bread and wine changes into the substance of the body and blood of Christ.

Through this miracle, God causes the appearances of bread and wine to remain but replaces the underlying reality that unites these appearances, the substance, with the body and blood of Christ. That’s why Catholics teach that during the Consecration at Mass the bread and wine *transubstantiate*, or change in substance, into the body and blood of Christ. This explains how we can consume what appear to be bread and wine and still be faithful to Jesus’ command to “eat his flesh and drink his blood.”^{[108](#)}

Finally, at Mass Christ is not re-sacrificed on the cross. Unlike the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, Christ’s sacrifice was perfect and does not need to be repeated on a continual basis (Heb. 10:10). Instead, at every Mass Christ’s sacrifice is *re-presented*, or made present again, to the Father, and we receive the saving effects of his sacrifice by consuming it under the form of bread and wine in the Eucharist.^{[109](#)} The *Didache*, a first-century catechism

manual, even tells Christians to “assemble on the Lord’s day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one.”^{[110](#)}

FALL AT HIS FEET

After I became Catholic I used to count the number of times I’d received the Lord in the Eucharist. “My seventh time receiving Jesus!” I’d say to myself. By now I’ve lost count how many times I’ve received the Eucharist, and when I’m tired and bored at Mass I become tempted to just “get through it.”

Then I remember a story the philosopher Peter Kreeft likes to tell. He says that when one of his students explained the Eucharist to a Muslim friend, the man said, “I don’t think you really do believe that.” The student asked why he thought that and his Muslim friend said, “If I believed that thing that looks like a little round piece of bread was really Allah [God] Himself, I think I would just faint. I would fall at His feet like a dead man.”^{[111](#)}

I’m glad what I “get out of” Mass isn’t just a warm, fuzzy feeling. I’d rather have the feeling of receiving the God of the universe in my hands, on my lips, and into my very body. I’d rather have the joy of knowing that God has humbled himself to become a physical object that makes the temple of my body (1 Cor. 6:19) home to his actual presence. In that way, Jesus’ very life is joined with mine so I can share eternal life with him.

HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THE EUCHARIST

In the third century, a young Roman boy named Tarcisius who assisted at Mass was asked to bring the Eucharist to Christians who were dying in prison. It was illegal to practice the Faith, so Christians hid in underground tombs called catacombs. When Tarcisius emerged from the catacombs, a group of non-Christians demanded he hand over the Eucharist. He refused and so they beat him with clubs until he died. According to the Church’s records of those who were martyred for the Faith, “they could find no trace of Christ’s Sacrament either in his hands or in his clothing. The Christians took up the body of the martyr and buried it with honor in the cemetery of Callistus.”^{[112](#)}

WHY WE BELIEVE: MASS AND THE EUCHARIST

- Jesus is the new Passover lamb who was sacrificed to take away the sins of

the world.

- The Passover lamb had to be eaten, which is why Jesus gave us his flesh and blood under the form of bread and wine.
- Christ is not sacrificed again at Mass. Rather, his one sacrifice on the cross is re-presented to the Father and through it we receive God's grace.

Why We Baptize Babies

I still remember the night I was baptized. When my name was called I walked up to the front of the church and dipped my feet into the cool water of the baptismal font. As the water swirled around my ankles, I lifted up my palms and closed my eyes.

I don't remember thinking about anything except the priest's voice saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father . . ." As he poured the water over my head I opened my eyes to see what looked like a shimmering curtain separating me from the rest of the church. He continued, " . . . and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

I wiped the water from my eyes and saw hundreds of people breaking out into thunderous applause, including my non-Catholic parents. As I stepped out of the font I thought of the conversion of St. Paul, who had become a hero of mine as I prepared to be received into the Church.

According to the Bible, after he met the risen Jesus, St. Paul was left blind until God's messenger Ananias visited him. He told Paul, "The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will . . . you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:14-16).

HOW BAPTISM WORKS

Jesus didn't say baptism merely showed other people we were Christians. Instead, Jesus declared that, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). St. Peter told a crowd in Jerusalem, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you . . . for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38), and in his own letter to the entire Church Peter said that "baptism . . . now saves you" (1 Pet. 3:21).

Before Jesus' earthly ministry, a prophet named John the Baptist called people to give up their sins and faithfully worship the one, true God. John's baptism didn't take away sin, but rather showed that a person was sorry for

his sins.¹¹³ However, John did say that, while he baptized with water, someone coming after him who was greater than him (or Jesus) would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matt. 3:11). Jesus' baptism didn't just symbolize a person rejecting his sins; it actually took away that person's sins.

BAPTIZED WITH FIRE?

In the Bible, fire often symbolizes purification, such as when God's way of making us holy is compared to how a blacksmith uses fire to burn away the corrupt parts of a metal. Just as the blacksmith's fire leaves only pure, stainless metal, the fire of God's love leaves a pure believer who is free from the stain of sin (Prov. 17:3, Sir. 2:4-6). The Bible says that God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), which means God is able to purify and "burn away" our sin so that we can stand sinless before him at the final judgment (1 Cor. 3:15).

God knows that we comprehend the world by thinking *and* by feeling. In order to help us truly understand that he cleanses us from our sins, God chose an instrument that every culture on earth associates with life and health—water. That's why Jesus instructed the disciples to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

PERSONAL VERSUS ORIGINAL SIN

I had been baptized as a young adult, which means that every sin I committed before that point was forgiven. But if baptism washes away sin, and babies don't commit any sins, then why do Catholics bother to baptize babies? The reason is that along with personal sin, or acts of wrongdoing that violate God's law, there is another kind of sin we all have—original sin.

WHAT IS SIN?

- **Original sin:** An inherited absence of God's grace that inclines us to sin and suffer death (CCC 403-404).
 - **Personal sin:** Choosing to do evil that violates God's eternal law, or failing to do good (CCC 1849-1850).
-

Unlike personal sin, original sin is not an evil thing we've done but an absence of God's grace in our souls. Baptism "removes" original sin by filling our souls with the love and life of God, or grace. So, when I was

baptized, not only did God forgive every sin I committed, but he filled my heart with his life and took away the stain of original sin. In that moment he gave me, as Paul says, “the spirit of sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! [literally, Daddy!] Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:15-16).

The reason this absence of grace is called *original sin* is because it is a consequence of the very first sin humans committed. When our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God, they lost the gift of God’s favor that protected them from death and suffering. After losing this grace they could not pass it down to their descendants, who in turn could not pass it down to us. Adam and Eve’s disobedience corrupted our human nature and made it possible for humans to suffer and die. Baptism cannot prevent our physical deaths, because it does not change our physical natures. However, it does change our spiritual nature, so through baptism we are saved from spiritual death by being united to Jesus Christ.

THE FATAL FALL

Some people say it’s not fair for God to punish us because of something Adam and Eve did, but original sin is not a *punishment*. Instead, it is a *consequence* of what Adam and Eve did that we have to endure.^{[114](#)}

To understand this, imagine a man is given an inheritance that makes him rich, but in his greed he steals more money from the estate of his deceased relative. The man’s wife and children, who didn’t know he did this, are thrilled about never having to worry about money again—until the police arrive, arrest the man, and the courts take back all the money he inherited.

The courts don’t punish the man’s family because they did nothing wrong. However, the man’s family still suffers because they would have been blessed with riches if he had not stolen more money. In the same way, we would have enjoyed supernatural gifts of grace if Adam and Eve had not fallen from grace and rebelled against God. St. Paul says that because of the fall of man, “sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

“O truly necessary sin of Adam,
destroyed completely by the Death of Christ!
O happy fault
that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!”

Even though one man's disobedience cursed humanity, one man's obedience saved it (Rom. 5:19). St. Paul says that Christ's sacrifice atoned or made up not just for Adam's sin, but for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). He also says that we are freed from sin by dying and rising with Christ, but how exactly do we "die and rise" with Christ? St. Paul explains:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).

BRINGING CHILDREN TO CHRIST

The Bible says baptism washes away sin (Acts 22:16) and makes us members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Should we exclude babies from the Body of Christ just because they can't choose to be baptized? Of course not! Babies never chose to be afflicted with original sin either, but we can choose to deliver them from this condition through baptism. Jesus even said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14).

It's true the Bible never explicitly describes babies being baptized, but it does describe entire households being baptized, which may have included young children (Acts 16:15, 16:33; 1 Cor. 1:16). Although the Bible never describes the way we should baptize someone, that doesn't stop us from baptizing people.

Should we pour water over a person's head? Should we fully immerse him in water? Could we just sprinkle water on people, especially if they live in places like the desert, which barely have any water? God's written word doesn't tell us, but God's spoken word, preserved in Sacred Tradition, does. The *Didache* records how the first-century Church practiced baptism:

Concerning baptism, baptize in this manner: Having said all these things beforehand, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living water [that is, in running water, as in a river]. If there is no living water, baptize in other water; and, if you are not able to use cold water, use warm. If you have neither, pour water three times upon the head

in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.^{[115](#)}

The Bible also teaches that the New Covenant in Christ is greater than the Old Covenant God had with Israel (Heb. 8:6). Since the Old Covenant included babies through circumcision (Gen. 17:12), this means the New Covenant must also include babies or else it would be inferior to the Old Covenant. In fact, St. Paul calls baptism “the circumcision of Christ” (Col. 2:11).

Some people in the early Church believed this meant that parents must wait eight days to baptize their children, because that’s how long people waited to circumcise babies in the Old Covenant. But the Fathers of the Church said babies should be baptized as soon as possible, especially since children in that time were at risk of dying soon after birth.

“NO ONE IS HELD BACK”

In the third century, St. Cyprian said, “The mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born . . . no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back.”^{[116](#)}

Denying babies God’s grace through baptism so that they can choose it later as an adult would be like denying a baby medicine so that he can choose to take it “for himself” when he gets older. Sin is just too serious to leave in anyone’s body, especially a child’s. That’s why even though I was baptized as an adult, I give all my children shortly after they’re born a gift I wasn’t blessed with at their age—the grace of God poured into their hearts through the sacrament of baptism.

WHY WE BELIEVE: BAPTISM

- Baptism takes away sin, unites us with Christ, and makes us members of his body, the Church.
- Infants must be baptized because they are born with original sin. Baptism is the ordinary means by which God removes original sin and makes us his adopted children.
- The early Church only debated when infants should be baptized, not if they should be baptized.

PART 4

SAINTS

SINNERS

Why We Believe in Spite of Scandal

Shortly after I became Catholic, I visited a party with some of my nonreligious friends, who were watching news coverage about the clergy sex abuse scandal. It seems that in several large dioceses priests who had been accused of abusing children weren't reported to the police. They were instead transferred to other parishes (or churches), putting untold numbers of children at risk.

As I entered the room, one of my friends turned to me, smirked, and said, "Great job picking a new religion, Trent."

PUTTING SCANDAL INTO PERSPECTIVE

It feels like a punch to the gut when something or someone you care about is caught up in scandal. You may even be tempted to cut off all association with a scandalized group or person and try to make a fresh start. But as St. Augustine is reported to have said, "The Church is not a hotel for saints, it is a hospital for sinners." The issue is not whether the patients are sinners, or even if the staff are sinners. The issue is whether the hospital (or the Church) has the *cure* for sin that has infected everyone. Pope Paul VI put it this way:

The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified [or made holy]; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity.^{[117](#)}

The clergy abuse scandal does not prove there is no God or that Christ did not establish the Catholic Church. If anything, the revulsion we have against child abuse shows that some acts are always wrong—no matter what. Since universal moral laws must come from a universal moral lawgiver, or God, this means the clergy abuse scandal should push someone *away* from atheism, not toward it.

The scandal also doesn't justify leaving Catholicism for a Protestant church,

since sex abuse is not only a “Catholic” problem. According to the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, about 4 percent of priests who served between 1950 and 2002 have been accused of sexual abuse (note that accusations do not always mean a crime was committed).¹¹⁸ Insurance company premiums suggest that similar rates of abuse exist in Protestant churches. According to one insurance industry spokeswoman, “Our claims experience shows this happens evenly across denominations.”¹¹⁹

This does not excuse incidents of sex abuse in the Church, but it does help us respond to those incidents. Just as we wouldn’t say public schools are “full of pedophile teachers,” we shouldn’t slander or abandon the Church because of the sinful actions of a tiny minority of the clergy.

IS ABUSE JUST A CATHOLIC PROBLEM?

Ernie Allen, the director of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, said in an interview with *Newsweek* magazine, “We don’t see the Catholic Church as a hotbed of this or a place that has a bigger problem than anyone else. I can tell you without hesitation that we have seen cases in many religious settings, from traveling evangelists to mainstream ministers to rabbis and others.”¹²⁰

GETTING THE FACTS RIGHT

Most accusations of sexual abuse among priests come from incidents that took place between 1950 and 1980. At that time it was thought that the urge to commit sexual abuse could be treated with therapy, and so involving law enforcement was not always necessary. According to Dr. Monica Applewhite, who has spent more than twenty years studying abuse and how to prevent it, “These treatment-based interventions for sexual criminals [instead of incarceration] were not only enormously prevalent in the United States, but surveys of ordinary citizens showed that they were enormously popular.”¹²¹

Modern psychology has now shown, however, that sex offenders are very likely to commit more crimes in the future. That’s why the Catholic Church has taken steps to increase transparency and accountability in the area of reporting sexual abuse. The Church has created offices of safe environment and child protection that have trained millions of adults to recognize signs of abuse. Dioceses across the world have instituted zero tolerance policies that

require immediate and mandatory reporting of alleged abuse to law enforcement. In 2015, Pope Francis created a special tribunal for disciplining bishops who had been negligent in their response to allegations of abuse.^{[122](#)}

According to journalist David Gibson, “The Catholic Church may be the safest place for children. Whatever its past record, the Catholic Church in the U.S. has made unparalleled strides in educating their flock about child sexual abuse and ensuring that children are safe in Catholic environments.”^{[123](#)}

HISTORY FULL OF SCANDALS?

The clergy abuse scandal isn’t the only event in Church history that has been misunderstood. Consider the Crusades, which were not cases of the Church trying to forcibly convert people or steal their land. According to Thomas Madden, one of the world’s leading experts on the subject, “The crusades remain today one of the most commonly misunderstood events in Western history.”^{[124](#)}

Instead of seeking riches and conquest, the Crusaders risked life and limb to rescue Christians whose land and homes had been overrun by Muslim invaders. Even Christian pilgrims who visited the region risked their lives to worship in the Holy Land. For example, thirty years before the First Crusade, a group of 7,000 peaceful German pilgrims were viciously massacred.^{[125](#)} This, among other events, prompted Pope Urban II to call the First Crusade. In a speech he gave in 1095 the pope said:

Let those who for a long time have been robbers now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians. Let those who have been serving as mercenaries for small pay now obtain the eternal reward.^{[126](#)}

This does not mean the Crusaders were always virtuous. Some of them took advantage of “the fog of war” and committed unspeakable atrocities against civilians and even other Crusaders. But this does not make the Crusades an unjust war any more than the firebombing of the city of Dresden, which killed thousands of German civilians, and made the Allies unjust aggressors during World War II.

A RABBI DEFENDS THE POPE

Another historical myth about the Church involves Pope Pius XII allegedly ignoring or even actively helping the Nazis. However, that claim originally came from a 1963 Soviet propaganda play called *The Deputy*. According to Rabbi David Dalin, author of the book *The Myth of Hitler's Pope*:

“Eugenio Pacelli [the future Pope Pius XII] was one of Hitler’s earliest and most consistent critics and . . . as both the Vatican Secretary of State and subsequently as pope, was in fact a friend of the Jewish people who was instrumental in rescuing and sheltering a great many Jews from the clutches of the Nazis.”^{[127](#)}

Finally, when people focus only on scandal they forget how the Catholic Church has been a force for good in the world. The Church built the Western world’s first universities, hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the dying. Its missionaries preached the gospel in far-off lands, where they had to fight barbaric practices like wife-burning, foot-binding, and child marriages. In the fourth century, the Roman emperor complained that Christians “support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us.”^{[128](#)}

In his history of medicine, historian Roy Porter says, “Christianity planted the hospital” and it was considered a mark of holiness to expose oneself to infection in order to care for the sick.^{[129](#)} This legacy continues today in the Catholic Church, which is the largest provider of nongovernmental health care in the entire world.^{[130](#)}

A PRIEST BRINGS LEPERS TO CHRIST

Throughout human history many victims of leprosy (a disease that causes numbness in the limbs and skin lesions) were banished to “leper colonies.”^{[131](#)} One large colony existed on the island of Molokai in Hawaii where, in 1873, a man named Fr. Damien volunteered to be the colony’s first priest.

For the next eleven years Fr. Damien did what many weakened lepers could not: he built homes, churches, and public utilities. He healed the sick, cared for orphans and widows, and celebrated the sacraments. In 1884 he contracted leprosy and five years later was buried beneath the same tree he slept under when he first arrived on the island.

In 2009 the Church declared him to be St. Damien of Molokai. His life could be summarized in these words he shared with one of his friends: “I make myself a leper with the lepers to gain all to Jesus Christ.”^{[132](#)}

RESPONDING TO “SPIRITUAL MALPRACTICE”

After one of my public presentations, a woman approached me and asked, “How can Catholics have the true Church when their priests do such awful

things?” I asked in reply, “Are you saying that all priests abuse children?”

“Oh, of course not,” she insisted, “but too many of them have.”

“What percent is too many for you? Personally I think one is too many, but does that prove the Catholic faith isn’t true?”

“If they’re really men of God in Christ’s Church,” she asked, “then how could they do that?”

I responded, “Let me ask you, does the devil hate Christ’s Church?”

“Absolutely!”

“Then of all the members of the Church, who is he going to attack the most?”

She thought for a moment and then said, “The priests!”

This is why we must pray for priests as well as for everyone else who fights against sin and despair in our world. This does not mean that we should excuse or ignore sins that any Catholic commits, even if that person is a priest. If you or someone you love was hurt by a member of the Catholic Church, know that I am sorry. Those responsible for these crimes, no matter who they are, must be brought to justice. Even if it turned out the pope was guilty of abusing a child I would wholeheartedly say he needed to be imprisoned. But just as a victim of abuse should not be blamed for a crime committed against him, the Church as a whole should not be blamed for crimes committed by priests or other Catholics who violate its teachings.

Leaving the Church because a priest or layperson committed a serious sin would be like swearing off hospitals because a doctor committed malpractice. What that doctor did was wrong, but that doesn’t change the fact that the hospital is still the best place to go if you’re sick. Similarly, Christ gave his Church the means to free us from sin, so we do ourselves no favors if we reject that remedy because some Catholics who fell into scandal refused to take it.

WHY WE BELIEVE: OVERCOMING SCANDAL

- Jesus never promised that his Church would be free of sinners, only that it would provide the means to save sinners.
- Some particular allegations of scandal are built on lies or misrepresentations of Church history.
- Scandal should not be ignored, but it also shouldn’t be used as a reason to

leave the Church, because the sins of a few do not disprove the truth of what the Church as a whole teaches.

Why We Believe that Faith Works Through Love

Once when I was eating in a cafeteria I noticed two girls at another table smiling at me. I smiled back and they walked over to where I was sitting as I thought to myself, “Still got it . . .” One of them then said to me, “Hi, could I ask you a question?”

“Sure,” I said, in as relaxed a tone as possible.

“Would you mind answering a few survey questions for us?”

“Guess I don’t got it,” I thought to myself.

They first asked me what religion I was and I told them I was Catholic. One of the girls then asked me, “On a scale from one to ten how confident are you that you’re going to heaven?”

I thought for a moment and replied, “I’m pretty sure I’m going to heaven, but I can’t give it a number . . .” The second girl jumped in and said, “Actually the correct number is ten (I didn’t know you could get a survey question wrong!). All you need to do to go to heaven is believe in Jesus Christ. If you do that you can never lose your salvation.”

While this sounds wonderful, the problem with this view of salvation is that it is unbiblical. The Bible does not teach that simply making an act of faith guarantees heaven for us. Instead, it teaches that salvation is a process of “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6), made possible through our spiritual adoption into God’s family.

GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

God desires the salvation of all people (1 Tim. 2:4). That’s why in one act of love Jesus Christ, who is fully man, represented all of us on the cross and perfectly obeyed God’s law in a way no other human could. Because Jesus is fully divine, his death on the cross had infinite value. It was a sacrifice of love that was so good it made up not just for the sins of Christians, but the

sins of the entire world (1 John 2:2).

Does that mean everyone will go to heaven?

God has given everyone enough grace to come to know him and his offer of salvation. But since God is love, and love never forces itself on the beloved, God will not force people to be saved. Some people will reject God's offer of salvation, but other people will not resist God's grace. They will see the ugliness of sin and ask God to help them escape it. They will follow the Bible's three-step plan for being saved:

- *Repent* (turn away from sin)
- *Believe* (turn toward Christ)
- *Receive* (be united to Christ)

In his first sermon, St. Peter told a crowd in Jerusalem, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). St. Paul likewise told the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). The text goes on to say that the jailer "was baptized at once, with all his family" (Acts 16:33).

The apostles preached that adult converts (like me) had to repent of sin, believe in Jesus, and then receive Jesus by being baptized. However, the order of these steps can be changed. For someone who hasn't committed a personal sin yet, like a baby, it would look like this:

- *Receive* (be united to Christ)
- *Repent* (turn away from sin)
- *Believe* (turn toward Christ)

When my wife was a baby she (like most Catholics) was baptized. This removed the stain of original sin and filled her soul with God's grace. This grace helped her when she learned about Jesus, and gave her "spiritual motivation" to repent from sin and believe in Christ and his Church.

SALVATION: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

So is that all there is to our salvation? Repent, believe, and receive? That's all there is to our *initial salvation*, or our being adopted into God's family. Our final salvation isn't complete until we enter into heaven. Between the

beginning and end of salvation are all the moments we live out in this life where we remember Jesus' teaching that "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 10:22).

Salvation does not consist of a single moment when we accept Christ. Rather, it is a process through which we live out our faith and obey Christ until death. Here's a scenario that illustrates what I mean.

Imagine you are caught in a storm at sea with some friends and your boat is sinking. You hear a broadcast on your radio telling you that if you want to be saved you must put on life jackets, report your position, and wait for help to arrive. As the boat pitches up and down and water sprays over the bow, you reply into the radio, "Yes, save us!" You then put on the life jackets and dive into the water.

Two days go by and your rescuers are nowhere to be seen. One of your friends says help isn't coming and decides to swim to shore on his own: he is never seen again. A few days later a rescue boat finds you, pulls you onto the deck, and you breathe a sigh of relief. "Saved!"

But when exactly were you saved? Was it when you set foot on the rescue boat? Or was it when you made the initial radio call? The Bible teaches that salvation is a process that begins in the *past* through faith, continues throughout our lives in the *present*, and ends with our *future* eternal glory in heaven. Let's take a look at each part of our salvation:

Past Salvation: Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast." That's true! Whether it was my wife who was baptized as a baby and later came to believe in Christ, or myself who came to believe in Christ and chose to be baptized, both of us were saved by *faith*. God adopted us as his children and we did nothing to earn that gift of faith; we simply chose not to reject it. This is similar to how the people on the sinking ship did not reject the rescue offer they heard on the radio, but accepted it and waited for help.

When the Bible says we are not saved by works, it means we did nothing to earn the first moment of our salvation. But as we will see, works do play a role in the process of our salvation.

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE?

In Romans 3:28 Paul says, "We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law." The

Reformers took this to mean that Paul condemned the idea that good works have any part in our salvation. But Protestant scholars like James Dunn and N.T. Wright have shown that Reformers like Luther and Calvin misunderstood Paul's argument.¹³³

When Paul talked about being justified, or being made righteous apart from the Law, he didn't mean good works have nothing to do with our salvation. What he meant was that a person is saved apart from obeying the Law of Moses, or that people don't have to become Jews before they can become Christians.

That's why in the very next verse Paul says, "Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also?" (Rom. 3:29). It's also why in Galatians 5:6 Paul says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love."

Paul did not teach that works have nothing to do with our salvation, because he said that God "will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Rom 2:6-7).

Present Salvation: In Philippians 2:12 Paul tells us, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." As long as a person remains in a state of grace, he will go to heaven after death. John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not *obey the Son* [emphasis added] shall not see life." That's why James 2:24 says, "A person is justified by works and not by faith alone."

There are no specific works that "earn" our salvation. Instead, we merit salvation by cooperating with God's grace to do the works he prepared for us before we were even born (Eph. 2:10). Because we are God's adopted children, everything we do in Christ, even mundane, day-to-day tasks, pleases God when they are done in a spirit of humility and charity. However, if we commit a mortal sin (1 John 5:17), and fall from grace (Gal. 5:4), then we risk losing our salvation (Heb. 10:28-29).

If we give up our faith or commit a serious sin and separate ourselves from God, then we will be like the foolish shipwreck survivor who tried to swim to shore on his own and perished. In fact, St. Paul warned his disciple Timothy not to be like people who rejected what their conscience told them and "made shipwreck of their faith" (1 Tim 1:19).

Future Salvation: Just as the shipwreck survivors' ordeal wasn't over until they made it to dry land, our salvation is not complete until we enter into God's kingdom. But in Romans 10:13 Paul says, "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Doesn't that mean all we have to do is believe and we know we will be saved?

Paul does not mean a person's salvation is finished immediately after he believes in Jesus. In Romans 13:11, Paul says of those who had believed for a

while, “Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.” Faith begins our salvation, and if we “kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7) *then* we “will be saved.” That’s why Paul warns the Church at Rome that if they don’t continue in God’s kindness, “you too will be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

Fortunately for us, God has given his Church the “ministry of reconciliation.” Anyone who separates himself from Christ, no matter what he or she has done, can be restored to an intimate relationship with God through the sacrament of confession (John 20:23). Those who choose reconciliation with God know that “any one [who] is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

FAITH THAT WORKS IN LOVE

Through God’s grace our hearts are transformed so we can perform works of love that please him and prepare us to enter into his kingdom. The effect of this grace can be seen in people like Mother Teresa (now St. Teresa of Calcutta), who devoted her life to serving the poor and the dying. She founded the Missionaries of Charity, which now has thousands of members who take a vow to give “wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor.”

Part of that service includes homes for dying people who could not be helped in hospitals and whose families have abandoned them. The missionaries founded the first home for people dying specifically of HIV/AIDS in New York’s Greenwich Village in 1985. A similar home was opened in Washington, D.C., despite public protests from residents who did not want “those kinds of people” in their neighborhood.^{[134](#)}

Mother Teresa summarized her work and her faith in this way: “By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus.”^{[135](#)}

WHY WE BELIEVE: FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE

- We are initially saved in the past through the gift of faith that comes from God and motivates us to be baptized (or motivates someone to baptize us when we are infants).
- We are saved in the present by obeying God and working out our salvation (Phil. 2:13) so that we can receive our final salvation in the future.
- Salvation involves being united to Christ and adopted into God’s family, where God freely rewards his children for the good works they do with the

gift of grace (James 2:24, Rom. 2:6-8).

Why We Believe in Purgatory

C.S. Lewis, the author of *Mere Christianity* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, was not Catholic but he did believe in the existence of purgatory. He knew dying does not change our sinful hearts, so God must do something to us after death in order to make us fit to spend eternal life with him. Lewis said, “Our souls *demand* Purgatory, don’t they?”¹³⁶

1 John 5:17 says, “All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal.” The Church refers to *mortal* sins as our freely chosen, gravely evil acts that destroy God’s love in our hearts. These sins forfeit our hope of eternal life with God unless we ask God to forgive them through the sacrament of reconciliation (confession).¹³⁷

Unlike mortal sins, *venial* sins hurt the soul but do not kill God’s grace within it. These are sins that people commit in their day-to-day life that do not completely separate them from God but do hurt their relationship with him. Catholics don’t have to confess these sins to a priest (but they can if they wish), and the Eucharist also cleanses us of these sins. But what happens to people who don’t seek the sacraments and die in an unclean state of venial sin?

C.S. LEWIS DESCRIBES THE NEED FOR PURGATORY

Would it not break the heart if God said to us, “It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy”? Should we not reply, “With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I’d rather be cleaned first.”

“It may hurt, you know.”

“Even so, sir.”

Since these people died in a state of grace and friendship with God, there is no possibility they will go to hell. But Revelation 21:27 says that nothing unclean will be in heaven. It logically follows, therefore, that these saved souls will be purged of their sins prior to spending eternity with God.

According to the *Catechism*, “The Church gives the name purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned” (CCC 1031).

Purgatory is not an alternative to heaven and hell nor is it a “second chance” to choose God. All souls that go to purgatory belong to people who died in God’s friendship. Purgatory isn’t a place as much as it is a state of existence after death, where we will be purified from sin. C.S. Lewis understood that because God loves us so much he won’t let us stay attached to any kind of sin, including minor ones, for all eternity.

WHAT IS PURGATORY LIKE?

We don’t know exactly what the process of purification includes or how long it will take. Jesus told the good thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43), and Pope Benedict XVI said, “The transforming ‘moment’ of this encounter eludes earthly time-reckoning—it is the heart’s time, it is the time of ‘passage’ to communion with God in the Body of Christ.”^{[138](#)}

WHERE IS PURGATORY IN THE BIBLE?

If you wonder where purgatory is in the Bible, then also wonder about this—where does the Bible say all Christians immediately go to heaven after death?

Some people say the Bible teaches that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” In other words, after we die we will be “present with Christ” in heaven. But that is a misquotation of the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 5:8 St. Paul actually says, “We would *rather* [emphasis added] be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

If I say, “I’d rather be away from the office and at home with my family,” that does not mean that once I step foot outside my office I will automatically be at home. Paul even tells us that after death we won’t automatically have blissful rest with Christ in heaven. He says we will instead “appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Cor. 5:10).

“The existence of a purgatory I have never denied. I still hold that it exists, as I have written and admitted many times.” —*Martin Luther*^{[139](#)}

The Old Testament describes how Judas the Maccabee prayed for the souls of his slain comrades and “made atonement for the dead, that they might be

delivered from their sin” (2 Macc. 12:45). Since prayers cannot help the damned in hell and are not needed for the saved in heaven, these prayers must have been applied to souls being cleansed of their sins after death in purgatory.

It’s true that Protestants reject the inspiration of deuterocanonical books like 2 Maccabees, but they can’t deny these books show how ancient Jews prayed for the dead so that their sins could be forgiven. In fact, Jesus taught about sins that are so serious they would not be forgiven in this life or “in the age to come” (Matt. 12:32). But this implies that “in the age to come,” or the afterlife, there are less serious sins that can be forgiven, which happens in purgatory.

Perhaps the most striking text about the purification we will undergo after death is 1 Corinthians 3:13-15. In this passage, Paul refers to the testing of our works that will take place after death:

Each man’s work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

These verses unambiguously describe God’s judgment after death and how our works will be exposed with fire. The fire may not be literal, because Scripture uses fire in metaphorical ways to describe cleansing and purification (Matt. 3:11-12). The text does say that when a man’s inferior works are tested, the man being examined will suffer loss even though he will be saved.

What could that loss be given that he will be saved? The most natural interpretation is that the loss represents the suffering he will endure after death, as the negative effects of his inferior and wicked works are purged from his soul. He will be saved, but as through a purifying fire, or what we call purgatory.

MAKING AMENDS

It is natural for humans to want to make up for the wrong they have done, but no amount of work on our part can make up for the wrong caused by our sins against an infinitely holy God. (Only Christ’s sacrifice can do that.) We can,

however, make up for the temporal or earthly consequences of our sins.

Here's a way to understand the difference.

If my five-year-old son recklessly breaks a neighbor's window, I will pay for the window because he cannot. If my son is sorry for what he did then I will forgive him, but I will also ask him to perform extra chores to make up for his bad behavior. This satisfies his conscience's desire to make amends and also helps him learn a valuable lesson.

We might think discipline is the opposite of love, but if you've ever been around a spoiled child you see that the lack of discipline can make a person angry, frustrated, selfish, and just plain miserable. Since God is our loving father, he also graciously corrects us, or as the Bible says, "The Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Heb. 12:6).

How does God our Father love us? "He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness" (Heb. 12:10).

For example, God forgave King David for committing the sins of adultery and murder, but he disciplined David by allowing him to suffer in this life (2 Sam. 12:7-14). Indeed, whenever we sin we cause pain and suffering to other people, and we develop an unhealthy attachment to sin. Fortunately, through his Church God has given us a way to make up for the consequences of our sins and become holy just as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:16). This gift is called an indulgence.

Indulgences are not special "tickets" that help Catholics get into heaven or stay out of hell. Indulgences do not forgive sins and the Church has never sold them.¹⁴⁰ Instead, through sincere and specifically prescribed acts of faith and charity (like saying certain prayers or even reading the Bible), the Church applies the merits of Christ and the saints to us, so that we can be purified from the effects of sin *before* death instead of afterward. These merits can also be applied to souls in purgatory by praying and obtaining indulgences for them, just as we would pray for any Christian who is striving for holiness.

In Colossians 1:24 Paul said he made up in his suffering "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." Since Christ's sacrifice is perfect, what Paul means is what is lacking is *our* sacrifice. God wants all of our sacrifices in this life to be united to Christ so that, as a family, we can help one another be full of grace and free from the effects of sin. That's why St. Paul says if we are

children of God then we are both heirs of God, “and fellow heirs with Christ, *provided we suffer with him* [emphasis added] in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17).

DOES PURGATORY TAKE AWAY FROM CHRIST?

If Christ’s sacrifice is perfect and infinitely atones for sin, then why is purgatory even necessary? It’s necessary because Christ’s perfect sacrifice must be *applied* to each individual in different ways.

Those who reject Christ’s offer of salvation, for example, won’t have the saving effects of Christ’s sacrifice applied to them. Believers who are attached to sin in this life will have the effects of Christ’s sacrifice applied to them after death in purgatory. Theologians like Pope Benedict XVI have even speculated that the cleansing fire of purgatory is none other than Christ. He writes:

Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Savior. The encounter with him is the decisive act of judgment. Before his gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allows us to become truly ourselves.^{[141](#)}

Purgatory doesn’t take away from Christ’s work, but rather *it is Christ’s work*. It is not something the Church created in order to force people to work their way into heaven. Purgatory is instead something God created so that the grace his Son obtained for us on the cross could make us “holy and blameless and irreproachable before him” (Col. 1:22), free from the pain and penalty of sin, and ready to enter into eternal glory with Christ our Lord.

WHY WE BELIEVE: PURGATORY

- Sin causes both a temporal and eternal harm to our souls that must be purged before we enter into heaven.
- Christ takes away the eternal punishment of sin, and it is through his grace that the temporal punishments of sin are removed in purgatory.
- Indulgences are a way we can remove the temporal punishment associated

with sin for ourselves and for souls we pray for in purgatory.

Why We Pray to the Saints

In the weeks leading up to my reception into the Catholic Church, I prepared to not only to be baptized, but also to be confirmed. The sacrament of baptism uses water to communicate grace that takes away sin, while the sacrament of confirmation uses hands that spread oil across the forehead. This oil seals the person with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to help him live out the Catholic faith. Hebrews 6:2 alludes to this sacrament when it says how, after baptism, we receive “the laying on of hands.”

In some churches confirmation candidates choose a new name for the ceremony, which is usually the name of a saint who prays for that person. A lot of people pick a saint they can identify with, so, since I used to be someone who mocked the Christian faith but now enjoyed defending it, I chose St. Paul. He was, of course, a Jewish leader who used to kill Christians, but after an encounter with the risen Jesus, he became one of the Faith’s greatest defenders (Phil. 3:3-11).

After our preparation class, one of the volunteers said to me, “You chose Paul as your confirmation name? Those are pretty big shoes to fill.” I wanted to say “I’ve got big feet!” but instead I admitted, “I know, that’s why I need his prayers.”

ONLY ONE MEDIATOR?

Many non-Catholics struggle with the concept of praying to saints because they think prayer and worship are the same thing. Since the Bible says we should only worship God, then shouldn’t we only pray to God? But the word “worship” refers to giving someone “worth-ship,” or the honor that person is due. We call judges “your honor,” for example, as a way of paying them respect, but we don’t treat them like gods.

“Prayer” comes from the Latin word *precarius* and refers to making a request for something. In Old English a person might have said to a friend, “I pray you will join us for dinner tomorrow night.” They aren’t worshipping

their friend as a god, but simply making a request of them. Catholics do the same thing when they pray to saints; they don't honor them as gods but ask them for their prayers.

DEFINE IT

The Church uses three Greek terms to define the kind of “worth-ship” we should give to those who are in heaven.

- **Latria:** The adoration and praise reserved for God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 - **Hyperdulia:** The honor given to Mary, the most blessed of God's creatures.
 - **Dulia:** The honor given to saints and angels in heaven.
-

Why should we ask saints in heaven to pray for us when we can just pray to God instead? After all, 1 Timothy 2:5, says, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Catholics agree that it is great to pray directly to God, but if this argument were taken to its logical conclusion, then it would forbid asking *anyone* on earth to pray for us.

After all, why ask a friend on earth to pray for you when you can go directly to God? Of course, St. Paul encouraged Christians to pray for everyone (1 Tim. 2:1-4), so 1 Timothy 2:5 must mean that Christ is our one mediator of *redemption*. Jesus Christ is the only person who unites man and God to one another and removes the barrier of sin between them. But Christ's unique role as our redeemer does not prevent us from mediating or interceding for one another—either in this life or the next one.

All Christians are united to one another because we are all members of the one body of Christ. Romans 12:5 says, “We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” If the saints in heaven are Christians, then they must belong to the same body of Christ to which all other Christians belong. This means Christians in heaven are united in the bond of love with Christians on earth, and so there is nothing wrong with asking them to pray for us.^{[142](#)}

ARE THE SAINTS ALIVE OR DEAD?

It doesn't make sense to say Christians who are in heaven are some kind of “amputated” part of Christ's body that cannot pray for any of the other parts.

Jesus calls himself the vine and says we are the branches (John 15:5). If Jesus holds the “keys of Death” (Rev. 1:18), then how could death ever completely separate the branches from one another as long as they are all spiritually connected to the same vine?¹⁴³

Jesus said that God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living,” and reminded his Jewish audience that the Father said, “I am [not “I was”] the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Mark 12:26-27). In the time of Christ (as well as the time of Moses), the Father was still the God of Jewish heroes like Abraham, who had died centuries earlier. To write off saints like them as being “dead” ignores the fact that, by virtue of their heavenly union with Christ, they are more alive than they were on earth.

In fact, Hebrews 12:1 provides an explicit reference to the saints in heaven having knowledge of what happens on earth. Hebrews 11 praises Old Testament figures like Abraham, Moses, and David, but then, in the first verse of chapter 12 (which in the original work was not separated into chapters), the author says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.”

The Protestant Bible scholar William Barclay says of this passage: “Christians are like runners in some crowded stadium. As they press on, the crowd looks down; and the crowd looking down are those who have already won the crown.”¹⁴⁴ The great figures of the Old Testament, which the Church will always honor as saints (CCC 61), are like members of a cosmic stadium cheering us to finish the race and “keep the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7) lest we be disqualified by our sins (1 Cor. 9:27).

HOW DO THE SAINTS HEAR OUR PRAYERS?

It might be difficult to understand how saints in heaven could hear our prayers by themselves, but for God nothing is impossible (Matt. 19:26). At Pentecost, God gave the apostles the ability to speak and understand different languages, so there’s no reason to think he wouldn’t give the saints this same ability (Acts 2:4-6). Moreover, if God will give us glorified bodies at the end of time, then why wouldn’t he also give us glorified minds that can know much more than normal human minds?

1 Peter 5:8 also says, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour.” Remember that Peter’s warning is given to all Christians in all times and all places. This means the devil, who is just a creature, has the ability to ensnare billions of Christians at the same time with unique temptations he has crafted for each of them.¹⁴⁵ If God’s enemy can have knowledge of what billions of humans do in order to tempt them, then why wouldn’t God’s friends, the saints, have a similar kind of knowledge and use that knowledge to pray for us?

HEAVENLY HELP WANTED

If the saints in heaven are aware of what affects believers on earth, then this naturally leads to the question of whether we should ask them to pray for us. Some people say that praying to saints is not in the Bible so Christians should not do that. But the Bible doesn't record anyone praying the "sinner's prayer" ("Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. Please save me."), but that doesn't make it wrong to say that prayer.

The Bible teaches that the prayers of holy people are more effective than the prayers of less holy people. For example, after Job's friends sinned, God instructed them to have Job pray for them. That's because Job was a very good man and God would hear his prayers (Job 42:8-9). James 5:16 says, "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects"—and who could be more righteous than the saints in heaven, who have been cleansed of all sin? Hebrews 12:23 refers to these people as "the spirits of just men made perfect," and Revelation 5:8 describes them offering our prayers to God.

Finally, just as Protestants don't worship the wooden crosses they pray in front of but use them as reminders of Christ's death and resurrection, Catholics don't worship statues of saints they bow or kneel in front of. They instead use these figures as an aid to prayer, and their posture is done out of respect to the figure being represented; it is not an act of divine worship. Bowing to someone who isn't God isn't always wrong because, for example, Jesus promised the Church that, at the end of time, he would take its enemies and "make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you" (Rev. 3:9).

In the third century, St. Clement of Alexandria said that when a Christian prays, "though he pray alone, he has the choir of the saints standing with him."¹⁴⁶ In fact, prayers found in Christian catacombs of the fourth century describe how people asked their deceased loved ones to pray for them. One inscription near St. Sabina's in Rome says, "Atticus, sleep in peace, carefree in your security, and pray earnestly for our sinful desires."¹⁴⁷

Catholics simply continue the ancient Christian tradition of paying respect to and seeking intercession from the holy men and women who reign with God in heaven.

ASKING A SAINT FOR A MIRACLE

During the Korean War, Fr. Emil Kapaun served as a chaplain and would often celebrate Mass using the hood of his jeep as an altar. He also ministered to dying soldiers under enemy fire. When his unit was captured and put in a prison camp, Fr. Kapaun dug latrines, gave away his food, and performed many other acts of heroism to help the soldiers under his care. In 1951, Fr. Kapaun died in the Sombakol POW camp, but over fifty years later people are saying he has not stopped helping young men in need.

Chase Kear, a member of a Kansas Community College track team, suffered what seemed to be a fatal head injury during a pole vault. Since Fr. Kapaun had always helped young men in impossible situations, Chase's aunt asked people in her church to pray for his intercession (Fr. Kapaun also grew up in a nearby Kansas town). Seven weeks later, Chase walked out of the hospital and told his story to reporters, despite the fact that a large part of his brain had been removed.^{[148](#)}

Chase and his family credit the prayers of Fr. Kapaun for his recovery, and the Vatican is currently investigating the incident as evidence for a possible declaration of Fr. Kapaun's sainthood.

WHY WE BELIEVE: THE SAINTS

- The Bible teaches there is one body of Christ and the saints in heaven belong to it.
- Each member of Christ's body should pray for the other members.
- The saints in heaven can hear our prayers and their prayers are powerful because they are holy people.

Why We Honor Mary

A few months before I was received into the Catholic Church, my family experienced a crisis. I was in high school when my mother told me she had been diagnosed with a large tumor in her abdomen. She didn't know how much longer she had to live, and my dad wasn't in the best position to take care of me and my siblings.

I felt like the weight of the world was on my shoulders, so I told my mom, "I need to just go to Church to process all of this." She had left the Church a long time before, but understood it was important to me, so she nodded in approval. I gave her a hug, told her I loved her, and started walking to the church.

As I knelt in that dark, empty church, my hands were clasped tight and my eyes watched the candles by the altar flicker. I just kept asking God for everything to be okay. Then I saw a statue of Mary. I took a deep breath and prayed:

Hail Mary Full of grace the Lord is with you, blessed are you among woman and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Devotion to Mary was the last hurdle I faced coming into the Catholic Church. At first, I feared that Catholics went overboard when it came to Mary and turned her into a rival goddess who took away glory from Christ. But the more I read Scripture the more I saw that Mary didn't take people away from Christ, she led people to him.

THE MOTHER OF GOD

The most important title the Church gives to Mary is also the one that explains why Mary matters so much to Catholics—*theotokos*. This Greek word means "God-bearer," but it is usually translated into English as "the Mother of God." Mary is praised above all of God's other creatures because

she has the most intimate relationship with God. She gave birth to God, nursed God, taught him about life, followed him throughout his ministry, and was at the foot of the cross when Jesus, the God-man, died.

If Jesus is God and Mary is his mother, it logically follows that Mary is the mother of God.

At this point some people might say, “Mary didn’t give birth to God, she gave birth to Jesus.” Yes, but is Jesus God? Calling Mary the Mother of God doesn’t mean that she created the Trinity or that Mary existed before God existed. Being a mother means conceiving and giving birth to a person. God is a Trinity of three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One of those persons, the Son, became man and had a mother (Gal. 4:4). It logically follows that this woman, or Mary, is the Mother of God.^{[149](#)}

Mothers don’t give birth to “natures” or “humanity,” they give birth to persons. The person Mary gave birth to was the divine second person of the Trinity, God the Son, whom she and Joseph named Jesus. Even Protestants understand that Mary should be praised in this way. Timothy George says, “Evangelicals can and should join the church catholic in celebrating the Virgin Mary as the mother of God, the God-bearer.”^{[150](#)} Martin Luther eloquently said, “Men have crowded all her glory into a single word, calling her the Mother of God.”^{[151](#)}

EVER-VIRGIN

When Catholics call Mary the “blessed virgin,” they mean that not only did Mary never have sexual relations before she gave birth to Jesus, she never had sexual relations at all. She remained “ever-virgin” throughout her life. But doesn’t Matthew 1:25 say Mary did not have relations with her husband “until” she gave birth to Jesus?

Yes, but the word “until” in that verse does not always imply a reversal of conditions. 2 Samuel 6:23 says, “Saul’s daughter Michal bore no children from that day on until the day she died” (ISV), but that doesn’t mean Michal had children *after* she died. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 15:25 says Christ “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet,” even though Christ will still reign even after he has defeated all his enemies.

Matthew 1:25 simply says that Jesus was born of a virgin. Concerning this verse, the Protestant Reformer John Calvin wrote, “No just and well-

grounded inference can be drawn from these words of the Evangelist . . . as to what took place after the birth of Christ.”¹⁵²

What about the “brethren of the Lord”? Matthew 13:55-56 describes the people of Nazareth saying of Jesus, “Are not his brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? Are not his sisters with us?” But consider that Mary calls Joseph Jesus’ father (Luke 2:48), even though Joseph was not Jesus’ biological father. This means that Jesus’ brothers and sisters may not have been his *biological* brothers and sisters, or had Mary as their mother.

The Greek word translated “brethren” in this passage is also used in the Bible to refer to cousins and nephews.¹⁵³ Matthew actually describes James and Joseph as the children of another woman named Mary (Matt. 27:56), and Mark refers to Jesus as “*the* son of Mary,” rather than “*a* son of Mary.” In fact, none of Jesus’ brethren are ever called sons or daughters of Mary, and it was unlikely that Mary would have given birth to seven children who all survived past infancy in a harsh first-century world.

Therefore, we can conclude that these brethren were Jesus’ extended relatives, perhaps his cousins. Joseph may even have been a widower who had these children from a previous marriage. This would explain why people from Jesus’ hometown referred to Jesus as the “son of Mary,” rather than by the more traditional “son of Joseph.” This would indicate that Jesus was not a child from Joseph’s previous marriage. Either way, the “brethren of the Lord” were not sons or daughters of the Virgin Mary.

Keep in mind that Mary’s decision to refrain from sexual intimacy was not because sex is bad. It was because the act of the Holy Spirit “overshadowing” her (Luke 1:35) and her body becoming God’s intimate dwelling place is so good! In the Old Testament, when a woman gave birth to a child she belonged to the father of that child. Since Mary gave birth to God’s son she belonged to God and gave her whole life to him.¹⁵⁴

Joseph was still Mary’s lawful husband and he protected her in a culture that was often unfair toward women. However, he also understood that many of the normal conventions we associate with marriage would be different because his family was “the Holy Family,” commissioned by God with raising the most important person who ever lived.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND BODILY ASSUMPTION

The *Immaculate Conception* does not refer to Jesus' miraculous virginal conception in Mary's womb. Instead, the term means that Mary herself was conceived without the stain of original sin.

The normal means to be freed from original sin is through baptism, but God is free to give his grace to whomever he chooses. He knew from all eternity that Mary would say yes to being the mother of his Son, so when she was conceived, God gave Mary an abundant gift of grace. In Luke 1:28, the angel Gabriel says to Mary "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" The Greek word that is translated "full of grace" refers to having grace as an enduring, complete quality of a person.¹⁵⁵

But doesn't the Bible say all people have sinned (Rom 3:10)? If that's true, then how could Mary have been immaculately conceived?

First, that passage refers to the truth that both Jews and non-Jews are sinners and need Christ. In Romans 9:11, Paul says that before Isaac and Esau were born they had done neither good nor bad. Millions of human beings die in infancy, long before they reach the age of moral accountability, and thus have never committed a personal sin.

But aren't all humans born with *original* sin? No, because Jesus was human and he was born without original sin. If we say that Jesus is the exception because he is God, or the new Adam whose obedience undid the crime of the first Adam, then we have room for another exception: Mary, the Mother of God and the "new Eve," whose obedience to God undid the curse brought about by the old Eve. In the second century, St. Irenaeus said, "The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith"¹⁵⁶

Finally, God demonstrated his surpassing love for his mother by taking her body and soul into heaven at the end of her earthly life. In the Old Testament, God assumed, or took, the prophet Elijah's body and soul into heaven before he died (2 Kings 2:11). The Church teaches that Mary was also assumed into heaven, and Revelation 12:1 describes a woman in heaven clothed with the sun who gives birth to the Messiah. She appears right after a vision of the Ark of the Covenant, which carried God's word written on stone tablets. It would be fitting if this woman were Mary, for she is the Ark of the New Covenant, who carried within her body the word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ.

"ALL GENERATIONS WILL CALL ME BLESSED"

As I knelt in that darkened church and prayed the Hail Mary over and over again, I more clearly saw that Catholics weren't turning Mary into a God. The reason Mary is "full of grace," "blessed," "holy," and the "Mother of God" is because her son is Jesus Christ. (It's amazing that, for the rest of time, God the Son will not only have a human face and body, but will bear a physical resemblance to a human woman who lived around 2,000 years ago.) The only thing Catholics were "guilty of" was recognizing the awesome role Mary played in the history of humanity. In Luke 1:48–49, Mary herself says "all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Speaking of awesome mothers, a few weeks after my mom told me about her diagnosis she was released from the hospital. I was nervous until she gave me the news: the tumor was benign. It ended up being the size of a basketball, but it was benign. I prayed to God, "Thank you for letting me have my mom for a little longer," and to his mother I prayed, "Please lead me and my whole family closer to your son, Jesus Christ."

WHY WE BELIEVE: MARY

- Of all of God's creatures, Mary has the closest relationship with God because she gave birth to him.
- As the Mother of God, Mary remained a virgin her whole life, was conceived without original sin, and was assumed into heaven.
- Catholics honor Mary because she always leads us to her son, Jesus Christ.

PART 5

MORALITY

DESTINY

Why We Protect Life

In ancient Rome, fathers had almost unlimited rights over their families. These *paterfamilias*, as they were called, could even take their own infants and abandon them in the wilderness if they didn't want them. Sometimes a passing stranger would find these children and raise them as slaves, but more often the children would be ripped apart by animals or slowly die of starvation.

Amidst this horror, the members of a new religion called Christianity took a stand. Their catechisms forbade killing children before and after birth, and some believers even rescued abandoned infants and raised them as their own children.¹⁵⁷ Fathers in the Roman Empire had the right to choose what happened to their families, but Christians said no one has the right to “choose” to directly kill another innocent human being.

Today the killing of unwanted children still takes place, but it doesn't happen in the wilderness. Instead, it takes place in hospitals and clinics, where it's called the “right to choose.” But just as it did 2,000 years ago, the Catholic Church opposes the killing of unborn human beings, and it does so with nonreligious arguments any reasonable person can appreciate.

IMPOSING MORALITY?

Some people say, “Don't like abortion, don't have one!” or, “Don't impose your morality on me!” But civilized people impose morality on one another all the time. We impose the view that stealing is wrong on shoplifters who think “it's not a big deal.” We impose the view that child abuse is wrong on parents who think hitting their kids “is not anybody else's business.” Furthermore, the Church does not *impose* morality. Instead, it gently *proposes* a way to live that treats all human beings with respect and kindness.

“The State may not impose religion, yet it must guarantee religious freedom and harmony between the followers of different religions.”¹⁵⁸ —Pope Benedict XVI

Once when I was giving a presentation at a secular university, a woman in the audience asked me if I would deny abortion to a pregnant woman who had three children she could barely feed. I agreed with her that poverty is incredibly difficult, but then I asked, “Would it be wrong for this woman to kill one of her born children, like say a two-year-old, in order to free up resources for her unborn baby?” She said, “Of course that would be wrong,” to which I simply asked, “Why?”

“Because you can’t kill *real* human beings,” she replied.

That, rather than poverty, was the real issue. If the unborn are not *real* human beings, then abortion is just a routine surgery and personally opposing it would be as odd as personally opposing heart surgery. But if the unborn are human beings like you or me, then personal opposition to abortion is not enough. If we care about justice and equality, then we must change people’s minds so that the lives of unborn children can be protected under the law.

HOPE FOR THE POST-ABORTIVE

The Church teaches that God’s mercy and grace are never far from the man or woman who is sorry for being involved in an abortion procedure. In his encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, Pope St. John Paul II wrote this message for post-abortive women:

Do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the sacrament of reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child. With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone’s right to life. [159](#)

WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?

If the fetus or unborn child is growing, then he or she must be alive. If a fetus has human parents and human DNA, then he or she must be human. The human fetus is also not a body part like skin cells or sperm or an egg. It is a whole human being who just needs time, nutrients, and the right environment in order to develop into a fully grown human being (the same things you and I need to develop into fully grown human beings).

The standard medical text *Human Embryology & Teratology* states: “Fertilization [also called conception] is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is

formed.”¹⁶⁰

DEFINING LIFE

- **Embryo:** Greek word that means “developing one”; a human being from conception until the eighth week of life.
 - **Fetus:** Latin word that means “young one”; a human being from the eighth week of life until birth.
-

Some people say that even if a fetus is a member of the human species, it is not a “person,” or it is not “fully human.” But what is a “person”? What makes us “fully human”?

If being able to think or feel makes someone a person, then newborns and certain disabled born humans would fail that test. Born babies can’t think or feel more than nonhuman animals like cows or rats, but we treat those infants better than these animals just because they are biologically human. Since science proves that unborn children also belong to the human species, this means we should value unborn children in the same way we value newborns, and protect them from being killed through abortion.

Other people say that an unborn child isn’t viable until birth, so it’s not a person because it needs the mother’s body in order to live. But what gives us the right to take a human being who can survive in one environment and place him in an environment where he can’t survive? Imagine if a group of Martians teleported us to their planet, whereupon we suffocated due to the lack of oxygen. Would their actions be justified because earthlings aren’t “viable” on Mars? Of course not! Just the same, unborn humans have the right to live in the environment that is designed to sustain their lives: their mother’s womb.

At this point, some people say, “Fine, it is a baby. But I have the right to do what I want with my body.”¹⁶¹ But if that were true then doctors could not deny pregnant women drugs like thalidomide, which, while effective at reducing nausea in pregnancy, can also cause babies to be born without arms or legs. Even more absurd, there would be nothing wrong with taking a healthy, prematurely born infant out of a hospital incubator, reinserting him into his mother’s womb, and then killing him, since a woman can do “anything” with her own body.

It’s true that we have the right to control our bodies, but that doesn’t give us the right to use our bodies to hurt other innocent human beings. This is

especially true with the tiny, unborn human beings a man and woman helped to create. If we expect fathers to be responsible and pay child support for the children they create, then shouldn't we expect mothers to be equally responsible for those same children? Shouldn't they provide "child support" through bodies that are naturally designed to care for those children?

WHAT ABOUT IN THE CASE OF RAPE?

It is never a woman's fault if she has been raped and she should never be punished for what happened. Unfortunately, in our culture we sometimes blame women for crimes committed against them, and in other cultures women are executed for becoming pregnant through rape. That's barbaric and wrong; no innocent person should suffer for another person's crimes.

But what about the child conceived in rape? He is just as innocent as his mother and yet we say it is okay for him to suffer for another person's crimes. Instead, why don't we provide nonjudgmental, nonviolent care for the victims of rape and only punish those who are responsible for committing this act of violence?

MANUFACTURED BABIES?

Although the Church supports technology that helps parents naturally conceive children, it opposes in vitro fertilization, or IVF. This process involves mixing sperm and egg in a laboratory and then implanting the newly created human embryo into a woman's body. Sometimes this woman is the child's mother, but in many cases it is a stranger who acts as a "surrogate" womb for the baby.

The Church opposes IVF because children have a right to be conceived and grow in the wombs of their mothers. They should not be manufactured in a laboratory by technicians who treat them like a product. In addition, more than one embryo is usually created, which means the healthiest child gets to live while his brothers and sisters are destroyed.

Some people find it hard to understand the wrongness of killing embryos, because they imagine human beings are constructed in the womb the way a car is constructed in a factory. If we wouldn't say a car exists when the first nut and bolt are screwed together, then how can we say a human exists when the first cells come together? But this analogy is inaccurate, because humans aren't constructed objects; they're developing persons. Here's an example from law professor Richard Stith that illustrates the difference.^{[162](#)}

In the twentieth century, Polaroid cameras printed their pictures on paper

that was stored inside the camera. When the paper emerged from the camera after the photo was taken, the image looked like a brown smudge. After several minutes the image began to appear on the paper, until it was fully developed.

Everything that was a picture of the Loch Ness Monster was there in that photo, just as everything that is a new human being is present in tiny human embryos.

Now, imagine you are on a boat on a famous lake in Scotland and you took a Polaroid picture of the Loch Ness Monster. You show the Polaroid to your friend, who then throws it overboard and says, “Too bad it was just a brown smudge and not the Loch Ness Monster.”

How would you respond to your friend? You would be furious and shout, “No! That was a picture of the Loch Ness Monster; you just didn’t give it enough time to develop for you to recognize it and now it’s gone forever!”¹⁶³

Likewise, an aborted embryo or fetus was a living human being who had simply not developed into the more recognizable “infant stage” of life. Destroying a human embryo or fetus doesn’t end the life of a potential person; it ends the life of a person with great potential.

These little persons, who are in a stage of life we all went through, possess the same dignity that exists in every human being from conception to natural death. This dignity deserves to be recognized and respected under the law, which is why the Church fights for the right to life of all human beings, especially the weakest and most vulnerable ones.

THE ABORTIONIST WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

Dr. Bernard Nathanson was a doctor who oversaw 60,000 abortions: he even performed an abortion on his own son.¹⁶⁴ In 1969, he cofounded NARAL, an organization dedicated to overturning laws that banned abortion. However, in the 1980s Dr. Nathanson saw the overwhelming evidence from ultrasounds and fetal photography that showed how abortion destroys the lives of small human beings.

He later joined the pro-life movement and admitted that he and other abortion advocates lied about the number of women who died from illegal abortions in order to get the laws changed. He wrote, “It was always ‘5,000 to 10,000 deaths a year.’ I confess that I knew the figures were totally false, and I suppose the others did too if they stopped to think of it. But in the ‘morality’ of our revolution it was a *useful* figure.”¹⁶⁵

Nathanson grew up Jewish but converted to Catholicism in 1996. He said, “I’m confident about the future, whatever it may hold, because I’ve turned my life over to Christ. I don’t have control

anymore, and I don't want control. I made a mess of it; nobody could do worse than I did. I'm just in God's hands."¹⁶⁶ The prayer card handed out at his baptism contained one Scripture verse: "God, who is rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4).

Dr. Nathanson passed away on February 21, 2011.

WHY WE BELIEVE: PROTECTING LIFE

- Catholics do not impose morality but propose moral principles that treat all human beings with dignity and respect.
- Human embryos and fetuses are biological human beings. There are no morally relevant differences between born and unborn humans.
- The unborn are not potential persons but persons with great potential who are unjustly killed when they are aborted.

Why We

Cherish Our Sexuality

Several years ago, a television show called *The Pickup Artist* would train socially awkward men in the “art” of seducing women, and then have them compete against one another. Each week the guys would be sent out, followed by hidden cameramen, and whoever could pick up the most women was the winner of that week’s challenge. A friend called me up and told me I had to watch the most recent episode.

“Why would I want to watch a trashy show like that?” I asked.

“Because your sister is on the show this week!”

I turned on the television and there it was, an awkward guy wearing a giant cowboy hat trying to pick up my sister. I screamed, “Don’t do it, sis! Don’t give this sleazeball your phone number!” But she did.

OBSESSED WITH SEX?

A lot of people think the Catholic Church is obsessed with sex or teaches that sex is dirty. But as shows like *The Pickup Artist* demonstrate, it is actually our culture that is obsessed with sex. Think of magazines at the grocery store that promise “874 Tips for Great Sex!” Or the fact that 70 percent of television shows contain sexual content.¹⁶⁷ The Church only seems obsessed with sex because it must interact with a culture that is always talking about it.

And contrary to what some people think, the Catholic Church does not teach that sex is bad or dirty. Pope St. John Paul II even taught that men have a moral obligation to help their wives experience orgasms so that the sex between them can be a truly intimate union.

THE POPE ON MUTUAL SEXUAL JOY

“What does a celibate old man in Rome know about sex, anyway?” Actually, a lot! After he spent several years counseling married couples as a parish priest, the future Pope St. John Paul II wrote a book called *Love and Responsibility*. In the chapter on “sexology,” he writes, “[I]t is necessary to insist that intercourse must not serve merely as a means of allowing sexual excitement to reach its climax in one of the partners, i.e., the man alone, but that climax must be reached in harmony, not at the expense of one partner, but with both partners fully involved.”¹⁶⁸

When people ask me why the Church teaches that sex outside of marriage is wrong, I don’t say it’s because sex is bad or makes someone “impure.” I say instead, “It’s because lying is wrong and God wants us to practice sexual honesty.”¹⁶⁹

THE MEANING OF SEX

In the second century after Christ, the Roman philosopher and emperor Marcus Aurelius described sex in this way: “It is the rubbing together of pieces of gut, followed by the spasmodic secretion of a little bit of slime.”¹⁷⁰ Fast-forward 1,800 years and the philosopher Peter Singer fares no better. In his textbook *Practical Ethics*, Singer says the morality of sex is no different than the morality of driving a car since, in both cases, all that matters is being “safe.” He even says, “The moral issues raised by driving a car . . . are much more serious than those raised by safe sex.”¹⁷¹

But almost everyone knows that sex is more important than driving and that it isn’t a mere recreational activity like going to the movies.

If I were to tell you I had seen 500 movies in my relatively short adult life, you would probably think nothing of it. On the other hand, if someone else said he had been sexually intimate with 500 people, most of us would be shocked. But if sex is no more special than driving, then why does such behavior shock us? After all, we aren’t shocked by Uber drivers who have driven thousands of people, so why be shocked by individuals who have slept with the same number of people?

Or consider that one of the worst things you can do in a romantic relationship is “cheat,” or be sexually intimate with another person. Most people would feel betrayed if their partner even *asked* to have a “meaningless” fling with someone else. But why? The only explanation is that sex can never be *objectively* meaningless. Instead, it has a sacred, unchanging meaning that is expressed through the language of the body.

For example, a handshake says, “Nice to meet you.” A hug says, “I’m here

for you.” But what bodily action says, “I give my whole self to you. I want to become one with you and be with you for the rest of my life”? It makes sense that an idea as powerful as the permanent, faithful, and total gift of self to another person could only be physically expressed through the most powerful way to unite two people—sexual intercourse.

WHAT’S WRONG WITH PORNOGRAPHY?

What the Church believes about pornography is best summarized in a quote attributed to Pope St. John Paul II: “Pornography is not wrong because it shows too much, it is wrong because it shows too little.” Pornography reduces people to objects that are only meant to satisfy the desires of a consumer. It also trains the user’s brain to be excited by sexual novelty and by power over other people’s bodies. But this attitude is disastrous in marriage, where joy comes from being a *gift of self* to one, irreplaceable person.

If you or someone you know struggles with porn, know that God loves you and wants to free you from this sin, and that there are steps you can take to make that happen. Aside from seeking God in the sacrament of confession, I’d recommend searching the Internet for Catholic “brain retraining” programs. These courses use exercises that “rewire” your brain so it can find pleasure in authentic sexual joy rather than the false promises of the pornography industry.

ONE FLESH

The Bible says that when God created Adam and Eve they “were both naked, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25). God doesn’t want us to be ashamed of either the bodies he gave us or the pleasure that comes from uniting those bodies with our spouse. God could have designed us to reproduce without sexual intercourse, but he specifically wanted husband and wife to become “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:6).

What does that mean?

Think about when a person receives a heart transplant. Even though the heart has different DNA, it becomes a literal part of the person’s body. The body and the heart “become one” because they each contribute to something greater than themselves (in this case, keeping the person alive).^{[172](#)}

Likewise, when a man and woman have sex, their reproductive systems, incomplete on their own, become complete by contributing to something greater than themselves. The couple’s bodies become one because through every act of sex they are ordered toward the creation of a new human life.

OUR BODIES AS TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two shall become one. . . .’ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:16, 19-20).

Not every act will result in a child, but each act does express through the body what the couple already expressed through their wedding vows: I give my whole self to you and only you until “death do us part.” In fact, sex has traditionally been called *the marital act* because every act of sex communicates marital love to another person.

This explains why cheating causes so many people to end a relationship: through their body, the cheating partner didn’t just “secrete some slime” with another person. Whether they intended to or not, they used their body to communicate the most sacred form of love and commitment to someone else.

Even if a couple consensually has sex outside of marriage, their bodies still speak a lie to each other. No matter how much an unmarried person may say, “I’ll love you forever,” he or she is always free to walk away from the relationship. As I told a group of couples I was recently mentoring, “You don’t need a divorce to break off an engagement.” That freedom disappears, however, after a person *publicly* makes this promise in front of the community, the Church, the state, and before God.

After marriage, a couple’s sexual union expresses the true reality of their lifelong, faithful bond to each other. The couple may even be blessed with what is the most obvious sign that sex is ordered toward a permanent, one-flesh union: a child who will usually outlive this love and be a witness of it to the whole world.

HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

Even if it doesn’t involve intercourse, other behaviors like genital stimulation and even heavy petting are only appropriate in marriage because they excite the body enough to make it ready to have sex.

Engaging in these behaviors while abstaining from sex is like driving up an on-ramp and then slamming on the brakes just before you reach the freeway. Outside of marriage these behaviors become another form of sexual dishonesty, and the more they are committed, the harder it becomes to unnaturally “slam on the brakes” and not allow them to fulfill their purpose through intercourse.

So the question we should ask is not, “How far can I go?” but rather, “What can I do to protect my beloved?”

On the other hand, when an unmarried couple conceives a child they often have to face the grim reality that, whether they like it or not, they have been forever joined not only to their partner (even if it's just as "the ex I had a baby with"), but to a third person. Unfortunately for that other person, the child, recent studies have shown that unmarried couples who conceive a child are much more likely to either break up or divorce after getting married than married couples who have a child.¹⁷³

FEAR AND PERFECT LOVE

In 1 John 4:18 we read, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." This is why I will never regret waiting to have sex until marriage. When my wife and I came together for the first time, there was no fear of disease, no fear we'd have an unplanned pregnancy, no fear that I would leave her if she didn't meet my sexual needs, and no fear of what other people would think of us. In its place was simply the joy of knowing that not only were we *allowed* to freely give ourselves to each other, but that is exactly what *God wanted* us to do now that we'd become husband and wife.

God's plan for sex never included shame, disease, lies, heartbreak, abandoned children, or abortion. Human beings brought those things into sex through the sin of sexual dishonesty. If you or your significant other has already had sex, then I hope you will find healing and peace through the sacrament of confession and make a renewed commitment to practicing sexual honesty.

No matter what your past experience has been, God loves you and wants you to be happy by saving sexual intimacy for marriage. That way, if you are called to married life, your sexual intimacy won't be haunted with shame, but will be an occasion when you can always honestly say to your beloved: "I give my whole self to you, and only you, as long as we both shall live."

WHAT ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

Once I was going for a jog in Balboa Park in San Diego when I noticed that the city's annual gay pride parade was passing through. I decided to ask people what they thought of the Christian protesters who had come out, and ended up having a conversation with three self-identified gay men. One of them asked me, "So what does the Catholic Church say about me being gay?"

I answered:

“The Church makes a distinction between someone’s desires and someone’s actions. We can’t control our desires, and so they shouldn’t be central to our identity. You can’t say someone is sinning just because they have certain desires because, like I said, you can’t control them. So I wouldn’t say that I’m straight or that you’re gay, but that we are men made in God’s image with different desires for sexual intimacy.”

They nodded, so I continued.

“Our desires don’t define us, but we can be held accountable for how we act on those desires. A husband might desire other women he’s not married to, but that doesn’t mean he should act on that desire. The Church teaches that we shouldn’t use sex for something it wasn’t meant for, which means it’s wrong for anyone to engage in same-sex behavior—even if they’re straight.”

They raised their eyebrows at the unexpectedness of what I said, so I went on.

“For example, if a straight guy has been in prison for a long time and he just wants sexual release, he might have sex with a man, even though he’s not gay. But that would be wrong, because sex isn’t just for satisfying our urges. For me, the big question I ask when I think about tough issues like same-sex attraction is: What is sex for?”

To my surprise, one of the young men said, “Procreation?”

My eyes lit up.

“Yes! You can love anyone without having sex with him or her, but for me it makes sense that sex isn’t an expression of just any kind of love. Instead, it is an expression of the love that only exists between men and women, and that reaches its fullness in the creation of a new human life.”

Rather than be offended, these young men pondered what I said and seemed to appreciate the reasonableness of it, as well as the fact that I didn’t just quote the Bible and rest my case. Before we parted ways I gave them the website of a Catholic group named Courage (www.couragerc.org).

Courage doesn’t try to change people’s sexual orientation. Instead, the members of this group help people who are attracted to members of the same sex to understand God’s plan for them as a whole person, which includes their sexuality. They even produced a documentary called *Desire of the Everlasting Hills* that is about three people with same-sex attractions who returned to the Catholic Church. You can watch it for free online at <https://everlastinghills.org>.

WHY WE BELIEVE: SEXUAL HONESTY

- The Catholic Church does not teach that sex is bad or dirty, but rather that it is a very good gift God gave us.
- Sex expresses through the body the language of marital commitment by making a couple “one flesh.” Sex outside of this context, including oral sex and masturbation, involves a lie, because the body expresses marital love outside the bonds of marriage.
- God’s plan for sex and marriage is not meant to shame us, but to free us from shame and give us peace and joy in our most intimate relationships.

Why We Defend Marriage

A few years ago I was researching the issue of marriage and came across a clip from the television show *Sesame Street*. It's a conversation between a little boy named Jessie and the character Grover. It begins with Grover asking Jessie, "Do you know what marriage is?" It continues this way:

Jessie: A marriage is when two people get married?

Grover: Yeah. That's good. That's marriage. What do they do when they're married?

Jessie: Kiss.

Grover: They kiss, yes; what else when they are married?

Jessie: Hug.

Grover: That's good. That's good. Anything else?

Jessie: Nope.

Grover: That's it?

Jessie: Yeah.

Grover: Are they friends also?

Jessie: Yeah.

Grover: Oh that's a lot in the marriage, isn't it? Kissing hugging, friends, helping, all that stuff. Yeah. Well, I guess that's what marriage is all about.

But this is not what marriage is all about. Why didn't Grover talk about the promise to be "true to you," in "good times and in bad, in sickness and in health," until "death do us part?" Why is there no mention of raising children or being a family? What *Sesame Street* is describing isn't marriage; it's cohabitation.

In contrast, the Catholic Church defines marriage as "the matrimonial

covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.”¹⁷⁴

I know that’s not the most romantic definition, but at its core this definition means that marriage is not just a legal *contract*. Instead, a Catholic marriage is a *covenant*, or a sacred pledge of loyalty between persons. In marriage, man and woman don’t just give their legal consent; they give their whole selves to each other both for their good and the good of any children they may have.

That’s why, in the face of tremendous opposition from the world, and even from other Christian denominations, the Catholic Church upholds God’s plan for marriage to be *permanent* and *open to life*.

“TILL DEATH DO US PART”

In 1969, Ronald Reagan, then governor of California, passed the first state law allowing for no-fault divorce. Instead of having to prove one partner committed a fault such as adultery or abuse, a marriage could be ended simply because the couple had “irreconcilable differences.” But what have been the consequences of this redefinition of marriage?

After hitting a highpoint in the 1980s, the divorce rate has returned to the level it was at prior to no-fault divorce. But that’s only because more people are choosing not to marry—11 percent more people, to be precise.¹⁷⁵ But that doesn’t mean an increased number of people have stopped engaging in the marital act.

In 1963, only 7 percent of children were born out of wedlock. Today, that number is 40 percent, and in some socioeconomic communities it’s as high as 71 percent.¹⁷⁶ On average, one out of four children in the U.S. lives apart from his or her biological father.¹⁷⁷ Research has found that children from divorced or unmarried households are more likely to live in poverty and more likely to be abused than children from stable marriages.

THE BEST GIFT FOR A CHILD

Child Trends, a nonpartisan research group that has studied the family for the past four decades, says that children in households with married parents have “in general, better health, greater access to health care, and fewer emotional or behavioral problems than children living in other types of

families.”¹⁷⁸ In contrast, a child whose parents cohabit but aren’t married is four times more likely to be abused. A child whose mother has a live-in boyfriend is *eleven times* more likely to be abused.¹⁷⁹ The best gift you can give your child isn’t the latest toy or game; it’s married parents who are willing to resolve their problems in a healthy way.

Aside from the evidence social science provides for the goodness of lifelong marriage, the Bible reveals that God’s plan for marriage always involved permanence. Jesus said that when a man and woman marry, “they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:8-9). To make his point even clearer he said, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (Mark 10:11-12).¹⁸⁰

The Catholic Church allows for legal separation and even civil divorce if there are circumstances like spousal abuse.¹⁸¹ However, if the couple are both baptized Christians, then, following what Jesus taught, they are still validly married and so the Church prohibits either person from getting remarried. Even if the marriage fell apart because of infidelity or abuse, sin cannot undo what God has joined together. But grace can overcome sin.

It gives divorced spouses the strength to bear the crimes committed against them, and it gives spouses whose marriages are in trouble the humility to seek spiritual and professional help. Marriage is not easy, but as St. Paul said, “I can do all things in [Christ] who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

DIVORCE AND ANNULMENTS

At this point some people will say, “I’ve known lots of divorced people who’ve gotten remarried in the Church. All they had to get was an annulment!” But annulments are not a Catholic version of divorce.

Unlike divorce, which tries to dissolve a valid marriage, an annulment recognizes that there was never a valid marriage in the first place. It may *appear* that the couple was married on their wedding day, but a necessary element of marriage was missing. This may include:

1. Understanding of marriage: You can’t validly say “I do” unless you know what you’re saying “I do” to. If a person attaches conditions to marriage (“I’ll stay married as long as we live near my family”) or does not

understand he or she are agreeing to be in a permanent, monogamous union that is open to life, then the marriage may be invalid, or never happened in the first place, and thus declared “null” (hence the term “annulment”).

2. Consenting to marriage: If a person is coerced or marrying to please others, then he isn’t free, and the marriage may therefore be invalid. The young man who marries his pregnant girlfriend out of fear of her family (in a “shotgun wedding”) would be one example of lack of freedom. But the presence of a psychological disorder or even being drunk on one’s wedding day could render a marriage invalid, since the person was not truly free to say “I do.”

3. Being able to marry: If a person is already validly married, below the age of consent, or is related to the intended by blood or adoption (among other circumstances), then he or she may not be capable of making the commitment that marriage requires, and would thus render any future marriage invalid if those circumstances—what the Church calls impediments—remain.

WHY DO I HAVE TO GET MARRIED IN THE CHURCH?

Just as a civil marriage isn’t valid unless it happens in the presence of a representative of the state (like a judge or an approved minister) and according to the law of the state, a Catholic marriage isn’t valid unless it happens in the presence of the Church and according to the law of the Church.

Weddings must normally take place in a Catholic church (unless the bishop has granted an exception), because marriage is one of the most sacred responsibilities a person will undertake in life and so it should begin in a sacred place. The Church also wants to make sure that the couple truly understands the vows of permanence, monogamy, and openness to the life they are agreeing to, which is why the Church normally doesn’t allow weddings to take place in churches of other denominations or in secular places where its views on marriage aren’t shared.

A Catholic who is married outside the Church would be in an invalid marriage (and thus would be sinning by having sexual relations). This situation can be resolved, however, by having the existing marriage convalidated, or officially recognized by the Church.

“FIRST COMES LOVE, THEN COMES MARRIAGE, THEN . . .”

The Church doesn’t demand that married couples have enough children to form their own basketball team. It also doesn’t tell them, like the nation of China tells its citizens, that there are a maximum number of children they are

allowed to have. The *Catechism* simply says that parents should exhibit “generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood” (CCC 2368), and that they should not use immoral means, like abortion or contraception, to plan their families.

In fact, many popular forms of contraception—such as IUDs and even some hormonal birth control pills—can kill an unborn child by preventing him from implanting in his mother’s womb as an embryo. But even if a contraceptive didn’t have the potential to cause abortions (like condoms, for instance), it is still wrong, because it’s another form of sexual dishonesty.

We’ve already seen how sex has an intrinsic, marital meaning. When an unmarried couple has sex, they physically express a vow, like permanence, that doesn’t exist yet and so they communicate a lie with their bodies. One of the vows the Church asks couples to make on their wedding day is to “accept children lovingly from God.” The couple doesn’t have to try to conceive a child every time they are intimate; they just promise not to directly sterilize their intimacy through the use of contraceptives.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Even though condoms were known to exist in ancient Egypt, the Jewish people believed fertility was a gift from God so they did not promote the use of contraception. In fact, the Bible only records one act of contraception, when Onan “withdraws” from sex before climaxing. Genesis 38:10 says, “What he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord, and he slew [killed] him.”^{[182](#)}

But why can’t the couple keep their vow to be “open to life” by using contraceptives only *occasionally*?

The answer is: For the same reason a couple can’t keep their vow of being “faithful” or monogamous by only having affairs “on occasion.” As we’ve seen, in order for sex to be a one-flesh union it must be a *total gift of self* (nothing, not even fertility, can be held back), and it must be ordered toward something beyond the husband and wife’s private feelings. It must be ordered toward the creation of a new human life.

But if that’s true, then how are couples supposed to follow the Church’s teaching that they responsibly plan their families? The answer: natural family planning, or NFP.

ORGANIC FAMILY PLANNING

It always amazes me that the same people who worry about buying organic food at the grocery store usually have no objection to using hormonal contraceptives, which the American Cancer Society has classified as a group-one carcinogen (or something known to cause cancer in humans).¹⁸³ That's why I love that NFP is an all-natural, latex-free, hormone-free way for my wife and I (along with millions of other couples) to space our children's births.

While men are usually fertile until they have one foot in the grave, women's fertility sharply declines later in life and is only present for a set number of days each month. NFP uses fertility tracking technology so if a couple wants another baby, they can choose to be intimate on a woman's identifiable fertile days. On the other hand, if they don't feel ready for another baby, they would simply choose to be intimate on an infertile day instead.

NFP requires both partners to work together to track fertility and decide when to be intimate. And to be honest, waiting for infertile days can be difficult. However, in my short time being married I've seen how the patience and communication NFP forces couples to practice helps to resolve conflict and improve marital health. Maybe this is why couples who use NFP have divorce rates between just 1 and 3 percent.¹⁸⁴

But isn't NFP just a Catholic version of contraception? In both cases, the couple does something so that they don't have a baby. Although they appear to be the same, they are not. Here's an analogy that explains the difference, and why NFP is moral and contraception is not.

Imagine you are trying to select a wedding date and it's right around the time your wife's high-school-age cousins have a big football game. If you really want them to attend the wedding, you'll pick the week before their game. But let's say your budget is tight and you have no more room on your guest list. You might choose to schedule the wedding during their big game and send an invitation anyway as a sign that you still value the relationship. If they show up, it might be a bit stressful, but you'll be glad they came.

Now, let's imagine you don't want to wait a week and you *absolutely* don't want the cousins to come to the wedding. In order to make sure they don't arrive, you send them a "dis-invitation" that says, "Please don't come to our wedding, you're not wanted here!"

How does this relate to NFP?

Picking the date that works best for the cousins is like being intimate on a fertile day; you've created optimal conditions for children to arrive.

Postponing the wedding by a week is like waiting to be intimate on an infertile day. The children probably can't arrive, but if they do that's still great!

Sending a dis-invitation, however, is like using contraception. Just as you'd be telling your cousins, "We want *this day*, so don't show up and ruin it!" using contraception sends the message to your future child (as well as God, who is responsible for every blessing of pregnancy), "We want sexual pleasure *at this specific time*, so don't show up and ruin it!" But children don't ruin sexual pleasure, they are its fulfillment, so we should never engage in an activity that sends the message that a child God may choose to bless us with is unwanted.

MARRIED SAINTS?

In 2015 Pope Francis canonized the first modern married couple, Louis and Zelie Martin. He said they "practiced Christian service in the family, creating day by day an environment of faith and love which nurtured the vocations of their daughters, among whom was Saint Thérèse of [Lisieux]."¹⁸⁵

It's not uncommon for marriages to be strained after the death of a child, and the Martins endured the deaths of four infant children. Rather than give into despair, they lived as a model of married holiness for their five surviving children. Their days were divided into time for prayer, garden work, and relaxation, much of it in the countryside where Thérèse inherited her father's love of flowers and nature.

After his wife passed away, Louis struggled with loneliness as each of his five daughters joined the convent and became nuns. He still said, "It is a great, great honor for me that the Good Lord desires to take all of my children. If I had anything better, I would not hesitate to offer it to him."¹⁸⁶

WHY WE BELIEVE: MARRIAGE

- Marriage is not a legal contract between two adults, but a sacred covenant between man and woman that, between baptized Christians, is an indissoluble union.
- A married couple always renews their marital vows in sexual intimacy, including the vow to "accept children lovingly from God."
- To responsibly space births, couples are encouraged to use methods like natural family planning, that do not harm either spouse or contradict the sacred meaning of the marital act.

Why We Believe There's a Hell

“What you people do is child abuse! You should be ashamed of yourselves!” a woman screamed at me while I was engaged in evangelism at a college campus.

I was genuinely confused so I asked her, “What exactly should I be ashamed of?” She fired back, “Hell! Telling little children they might go to hell traumatizes them!”

I’ll admit this scares me! It’s almost too difficult to imagine the possibility of being in agony not just for a while, but forever, living in despair and pain without end. And yet we can’t reject hell just because we don’t like it. Just as it’s not child abuse to warn children about “stranger danger” or what will happen if they run into traffic, even if the truth is scary, it’s not child abuse to warn children (or adults) about the dangers of hell—provided that hell is real.

WHO BELIEVES IN HEAVEN AND HELL?

Fifty-eight percent of Americans believe in hell and 72 percent believe in heaven. Even among nonreligious people, 36 percent believe in hell and 50 percent believe in heaven.^{[187](#)}

WHAT THE HELL?

In the New Testament, the word “hell” usually refers to the final, eternal dwelling place for the damned.^{[188](#)} According to the *Catechism*, “To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell’” (CCC 1033).

Scripture uses a variety of images to describe the awfulness of hell. Christ said it was a place of fire (Matt. 5:22), undying worms (Mark 9:48), gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:42), and an outer darkness (Matt. 22:13). Matthew even compared it to Gehenna (Matt. 23:33), which was a place where children

were offered as fire sacrifices to pagan gods.^{[189](#)} Since Jesus walked out of his own tomb, he is a reliable source about the afterlife, and so we should believe what he taught about hell.

While Christ used earthly images to convey spiritual truths, we must remember that none of these images, including those of unending fire, are necessarily literal descriptions of hell. But even if hell is not a place of literal fire, it is still the worst thing we can imagine. Those who think hell is fun because all the “cool sinners” will be there should think again.

The sins that make life miserable, like selfishness, greed, hatred, and the vindictive desire to hurt others because we’ve been hurt, are just some of the evils that make hell so “hellish.” In hell, sinners will eternally receive the one thing they cared the most about in life—theirself. Pope St. John Paul II said,

The images of hell that Sacred Scripture presents to us must be correctly interpreted. They show the complete frustration and emptiness of life without God. Rather than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and

definitively separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy.^{[190](#)}

DOES HELL LAST FOREVER?

The most terrifying aspect of hell is its permanence. According to the *Catechism*, “The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs” (CCC 1035). Jesus taught that hell is not temporary but lasts forever. He said that those who are damned “will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46).^{[191](#)}

Some argue that if God were fair, then hell would be temporary and someone could eventually “work themselves” out of it. But no one can ever work himself out of hell any more than he could work himself into heaven. Salvation is a gift from God that we “work out” in this life (Phil. 2:12) by persevering in faith that works through love (Gal. 5:6) until the end of our lives (Matt. 10:22). The only time we can accept this gift, or this free offer of grace from God, is during our earthly lives. Upon our death, our choices in this life forever seal what our destinies will be in the next life (Heb. 9:27).

Moreover, if hell were temporary, it would be incredibly unjust. Since

heaven includes eternal bliss and happiness with God, then no matter how long a person spends in hell it will seem like only a few seconds compared to the infinite happiness that awaits them in heaven. It would be like telling a child who purposefully breaks his sibling's arm that he has to go to "time out" for thirty seconds before he can go to an amusement park for the rest of the day.

Hell may also be eternal because the damned continue to sin and reject God after death. In this scenario, their punishment is everlasting because *they* make it that way and cannot do otherwise. If you've ever been around a self-centered person, you know he finds it excruciating to be in the presence of a person everyone else admires more. The damned in hell may even love themselves and their sins so much that the selfless love of God may be unbearable to them. They may even choose to remain in hell, thinking it is better than heaven.

WHAT ABOUT REINCARNATION?

After death the soul proceeds to heaven, hell, or purgatory; it does not return to earth to inhabit another body or become reincarnated. We can know this from the testimony of Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and even human reason.

First, humans do not behave as if they possessed souls that lived before the birth of their bodies. The third-century ecclesial writer Tertullian put it this way, "If souls depart at different ages of human life, how is it that they come back again at one uniform age? For all men are imbued with an *infant soul* at their birth. But how happens it that a man who dies in old age returns to life as an infant?"¹⁹²

Second, if proponents of reincarnation are correct and souls are never created or destroyed but are only "reborn" into other bodies, then why has the human population been growing over time? This can only be explained by the creation of new human souls rather than the reincarnation of the same group of souls into different bodies.

Finally, if our memories from our previous lives are lost when we reincarnate, then, in the words of St. Irenaeus, "How do advocates of reincarnation know we've all been reincarnated?"¹⁹³ It makes more sense to believe, as Hebrews 9:27 teaches, that, "it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment."

IS HELL UNFAIR?

Many people ask, "How could a loving God send someone to hell?" But this question, as honest and important as it is, displays a mistaken view of the relationship between earthly choices and eternal destinies. The *Catechism* says, "God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a willful turning away from God [a mortal sin] is necessary, and persistence in it until the end"

(CCC 1037).

Hell is not something God created for the purpose of arbitrarily punishing people. Instead, *humans* created the necessity for hell through sinful choices that separated them from God. The Bible says that God is love (1 John 4:8) and God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), but love is free. God does not save people who don't want to be saved from their sins. According to the *Catechism*, "We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves" (CCC 1033).

Another objection to hell is that it's unfair to inflict an infinite punishment for a finite crime. But the length of time it took to commit a crime does not indicate what the punishment for the crime should be. After all, a parking violation could happen over a period of hours while a murder could happen in a few seconds. It is the *nature* of the crime and the *intention* of the criminal that are relevant in deciding what the punishment should be.

THE REALITY OF THE DAMNED

"There can be people who have totally destroyed their desire for truth and readiness to love, people for whom everything has become a lie, people who have lived for hatred and have suppressed all love within themselves. This is a terrifying thought, but alarming profiles of this type can be seen in certain figures of our own history. In such people all would be beyond remedy and the destruction of good would be irrevocable: this is what we mean by the word *hell*."¹⁹⁴ —Pope Benedict XVI

But are the crimes in this life really so serious that they deserve infinite punishment in the next? Many people are willing to accept that while very awful people like genocidal dictators or sadistic serial killers deserve to go to hell, regular "good people" who commit "everyday" sins do not. But what makes someone a good person?

Does she give 20 percent of her income to charity? Does he ever gossip about people or break a promise? In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul said that everyday sins like jealousy, anger, selfishness, sexual immorality, and drunkenness can prevent an otherwise good person from going to heaven (Gal. 5:19-20).

It's easy to define our own standard of a good person so that we always "clear the bar," but it's harder to meet Jesus' standard. He said, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48). No matter how hard we try, none of us is "good enough" to get to heaven on

our own. That's why we need the free gift of God's grace so that we can be transformed not into "good people," but into "God's people," who share his divine life and are prepared in this life to be able to receive his unending love for all eternity.

A CHILD ALIVE AGAIN

In the Gospels, Jesus told a parable about a son who left home and squandered the money his father gave him. He became so poor he nearly starved to death, but he didn't think his father would let him come home. He hoped that maybe his father would let him work as a servant so he could at least have something to eat.

The son then decided to make the journey home, and Jesus says, "While he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). The Father then threw a party for the son because, as he says, "my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24).

This is called the parable (or story) of the prodigal son. Many people, including non-Christians, have heard it, but there's a detail that often gets missed: the father sees the son at a distance. This is probably because the father kept watch every day, waiting for his son's return. Imagine the joy he felt when he recognized the far-off figure was his son—alive and safe in his arms again!

Like the father of the prodigal son, God won't force us to love him or obey him. This is why hell is a real possibility for those who choose selfishness and sin over love and holiness. But like the father in the parable, God is always waiting for us to come home to him. That's why 2 Peter 3:9 says that God is patient with us, "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

WHY WE BELIEVE: HELL

- Since God is love, he never forces anyone to love or obey him, but allows those people to live apart from him for all eternity, a state that is called hell.
- Since God is just, he punishes evil by allowing unrepentant sinners to choose their sin over his goodness and life.
- Since God is merciful, he gives everyone an opportunity to know him, reject

sin, and choose eternal life through his son, Jesus Christ.

Why We Hope for Heaven

The famous evangelist Billy Graham once visited a small town to preach at the local church. Before he went to the church he needed to mail a letter back home, so he went looking for the post office. He pulled his car over to the side of the road and asked a boy walking his dog where it was and the boy politely answered.

Mr. Graham then invited the boy to attend the church where he'd be preaching. He said, "You can hear me telling everyone how to get to heaven." The boy simply replied, "I don't think I'll be there. You don't even know your way to the post office!"¹⁹⁵

WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE?

"How do I get to heaven?" is one of the most important questions a person can ask. But what do we mean by the word "heaven?"

In some cases, the Bible uses the word "heaven" to refer to the sky, or to the place of the sun, stars, and moon. This is seen in passages like Psalm 19:1, which says, "The heavens are telling the glory of God." Other times, "heaven" refers to the place where God dwells, as in the Lord's Prayer, where we address "Our Father who art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). Finally, "heaven" is used to refer to the eternal dwelling place of those who love God. St. Paul says, "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20, NIV).

Many people imagine this heaven to be a place in the clouds where saints and angels play harps for all eternity. But while the Bible does use earthly imagery like wedding feasts to describe heaven, the *Catechism* says, "This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description" (CCC 1027). Paul, quoting the promises given to the prophet Isaiah, said, "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Our inexact knowledge of heaven does not mean that we are ignorant of heaven in general. According to Pope St. John Paul II, “The ‘heaven’ or ‘happiness’ in which we will find ourselves is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity.”¹⁹⁶ In heaven we won’t be angels; we will be reunited with our bodies and will experience both spiritual and physical joy in the presence of God. The *Catechism* teaches us, “Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness” (CCC 1024).

“THEN I SHALL UNDERSTAND FULLY”

St. Paul once compared our knowledge of God in this life to our knowledge of ourselves when we see our reflection in a dirty bronze mirror. At this time in history glass mirrors were just beginning to be invented and were not as popular as polished metal. He said, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood” (1 Cor. 13:12). Because of sin and our fallen human natures, we only perceive God indirectly; our relationship with him lacks the intimacy and wonder that it will have in heaven.

Heaven won’t be an eternally long Church service; that would be as insufferable as hell. In fact, any earthly activity, be it a Church service, a rock concert, or a day at an amusement park, would be hellish if it were drawn out over an infinite period of time. Heaven won’t consist of unending earthly joys, because these finite things can’t satisfy our longing for perfect and unending happiness.

But God, who is infinite goodness itself, is the only reality that can provide us with the perfect love and understanding our hearts desire. In heaven, believers will adore God for all eternity and never reach an end or stagnant plateau of what they adore.

CAN ANYONE GET TO HEAVEN?

St. Paul says that even though non-Jews were not given written, divine revelation, God would judge them on the basis of another law. Paul says, “What the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus” (Rom. 2:15-16).

Does this contradict Jesus' teaching that he is "the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6)? No, because acknowledging that Christ is the only *objective* way we are saved (i.e., only Christ takes away the sins of the world) does not mean a person cannot be saved if he does not know this truth about Christ. For example, one could say antivenom is the only way to be saved from a snakebite, but a child receiving antivenom does not have to know this truth in order to be saved from the bite.

Similarly, a person could seek after "the way" or "the truth" and strive to act with perfect love, all without realizing that he was unknowingly seeking after Christ who is "the way, the truth, and the life." This also applies to non-Catholic Christians who do not understand the ordinary necessity of receiving sacraments like the Eucharist for salvation. The *Catechism* says that those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church" (CCC 838).

But if people can be saved if they don't know Jesus or his Church, then why bother telling them about the Faith at all? Don't we risk their souls by giving them an opportunity to reject the gospel?

Consider this analogy. Imagine you are trying to help people cross over a river that has partially frozen over. The river is shrouded in fog and when people choose to walk across its icy surface they disappear into the mist. Did they make it across? It's *possible* they safely made it, but it's also possible, if not probable, that many of them did *not* make it across. Let's say, however, that you knew about a bridge that safely crosses over the river. Even if they might reject your offer, wouldn't you still tell people about this safer and more certain way to get across the river?

Preaching the gospel doesn't endanger souls because every person who never knew Jesus will not automatically go to heaven. Such people, like everyone else, are tempted by sin, and without God's grace it is even harder for these people to resist the devil's lies. The Church is, therefore, mindful of these people and so it, "fosters the missions with care and attention."¹⁹⁷ That's why Jesus commanded his followers to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

WHY WE BELIEVE . . . EVERYTHING

My favorite description of heaven is from a homily I heard a deacon tell more

than a decade ago. As a child, the deacon lived in Maine, and one winter he developed a severe case of strep throat and had to be hospitalized. His mother was usually at home caring for his siblings and his father had to travel for work. He loved reading the letters his dad sent from the road, but usually he spent a lot of time by himself listening to the radio or just staring out the window.

One day he woke up and it was quiet all around his hospital room. There didn't even seem to be anyone out in the hall. It was cold outside, but the rays of the sun warmed the floor by the window. He got out of bed, shuffled over to the window, and saw a car pull up beside a tree whose leaves were shedding.

As the orange and brown leaves gently fell to the ground, the little boy saw a man getting out. He was wearing a dark suit and a hat obscured his face. But when the man looked up, the little boy recognized it was his father, home early from his trip. His heart swelled with joy and he ran down the hallway and the stairs of the hospital. He leapt into his father's arms and shouted, "Daddy, you're home!"

The deacon then spoke about heaven and what people think it is. He hoped that at the end of his life he would be at home and would get to say goodbye to his wife, children, and grandchildren.

He imagined that after breathing his last breath, the next moment he would be opening his eyes and seeing the same ceiling over the same hospital bed he was confined to as a child (he even thought his throat might be sore from the cleansing he received in purgatory). All he would hear was the creaking of his bed as he placed his feet on the same tile floor warmed by the sun shining through the window.

With his hands pressed against the cool glass, he would see gently falling leaves and his father—but this time it would be his heavenly Father. Then he would run. His body would leap like he was ten years old again and in one embrace he'd feel the warmth of God's all-powerful love. Struggling to overcome his emotions, he holds tight, never wanting to let go again, and exclaims, "Daddy, I'm home!"

This is why we're Catholic. Not to follow arbitrary rules or rituals, but to go home. Everyone knows, deep down, that sin has wounded our relationship with God and with one another. We are Catholic because we want to give up the empty promises of sin and trust in God's promises to his family, which is united to him through the Church his Son gave us.

If you have been away from the Church, no matter how long, or even if you aren't Catholic, I'd like to invite you to experience God's love and discover his plan for you in the Catholic Church. I'd like to invite you to come home.

WHY WE BELIEVE: HEAVEN

- Heaven is the state of perfect happiness where we will adore and rest in God for all eternity.
- God will judge people on the revelation they've received and he extends his offer of salvation to everyone, even if they've never heard of Christ or his Church.
- Out of love for their fellow man, Christians are called to preach the gospel to the entire world so that anyone can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and find salvation through his Church.

How to Become Catholic

If you (or someone you know) are interested in becoming Catholic, seek out a nearby Catholic parish and inquire about its RCIA program. RCIA stands for “Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults” and has always been present, in some form, since the beginning of Church history, as a way of preparing adults and older children to enter the Church. It’s also available to Catholics who have fallen from the practice of the Faith and want to come back, or who just want to learn more.

Prospective converts to the Catholic faith are called catechumens, which means “ones being instructed.” A local priest or religious education director can determine what level of instruction a catechumen needs, but normally they will encourage the person to take part in a process that includes:

The Period of Inquiry: This time allows prospective converts to learn about the Catholic Church by attending Mass, spending time with the Lord in an adoration chapel, meeting with a priest or knowledgeable Catholic, or even by listening to Catholic radio or television. Above all else, the catechumen should pray for guidance through the RCIA process in order to develop a personal relationship with God through his son, Jesus Christ.

The Order of Catechumens: An inquirer who wishes to become Catholic enters the order of catechumens. In order to do this, he is required to select a sponsor, a practicing Catholic who will guide and support him through the process and will be present when he receives the sacraments of initiation.

Catechesis: The catechumen is formally taught the doctrines of the Faith and instructed in how to live the Christian life. This period culminates in the Rite of Election, where the Church formally recognizes a person’s desire to become Catholic.

The Sacraments of Initiation: For most people, the RCIA process reaches its climax at the Easter Vigil, where non-Christian catechumens receive baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist. Catechumens from other Christian denominations with valid baptisms receive confirmation and the Eucharist. It is a joyous occasion that celebrates how God has brought his children into full communion with Christ’s “one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.”

How to Go to Confession

If you are Catholic you can be at peace with God by confessing your sins in the sacrament of reconciliation, or what is often called confession. Before you receive the sacrament understand that God doesn't want you to feel miserable for your sins: he wants to free you from them. But in order to do that, we must repent, or turn away from sin and turn toward Christ. The only way we can reject our sins is by identifying them and expressing our sorrow to God for having committed them.

In the sacrament of reconciliation you can confess any sin, but you must confess any mortal sins you've committed, or gravely evil actions you freely chose to take part in even though you knew they were wrong. These sins cut us off from a relationship with God, and so we must seek forgiveness for having committed them. One way to determine if you've committed a mortal sin is to conduct an "examination of conscience." These practical guides, which can be found online, ask a series of questions that help us see if we have committed a mortal sin. Here are some examples of sins that can be mortal, and thus need to be confessed:

1. Denying God exists or rejecting the Catholic faith
2. Taking God's name in vain or failing to go to Mass on Sunday and other important Holy Days
3. Disrespecting or failing to care for one's parents
4. Murder, abortion, or intense hatred of others
5. Adultery, sex outside of marriage, the use of contraception, the use of pornography, getting married outside of the Church, or engaging in homosexual behavior
6. Stealing that causes serious harm
7. Lies or even gossip that cause serious harm

After you've examined your conscience, you are ready to receive the sacrament of confession. Most Catholic churches offer this sacrament on a certain day of the week, which can be found on the church's website or by calling the parish office. In the church, there will usually be a room off to the side with a sign indicating that it is where confession is held. Don't worry if it's been a long time or if you've never been to confession. The priest will

help you through any part of the sacrament you aren't familiar with, but here are the basic steps to remember:

1. Introduction: You can speak to a priest directly or from behind a curtain to remain anonymous. Begin by saying, "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been [insert amount of time] since my last confession."

2. Confession: Keep it simple and just say what sins you committed and how many times you committed them. Don't worry about explaining unnecessary details or why you sinned, you just need to tell the priest your sins and say you're truly sorry. If you can't remember how many times you committed a sin, give an estimate. If you desire further counseling, call the church office and an appointment can usually be made so you can discuss these issues with a priest at greater length.

3. Contrition: The priest will then ask you to say an Act of Contrition. Here is one many Catholics use: "My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against You, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy."

Don't worry about memorizing this prayer as it is usually posted in the confessional for you to recite (though it's still a good prayer to memorize).

4. Penance: The priest will suggest something for you to do, such as a series of prayers, to make up for the consequences of your sins. Only Christ can make up for the eternal consequence of our sins, but through our prayers and works we can make up for the harm our sins cause in this life. Remember the penance you're given and complete it soon after your confession.

5. Absolution: The priest will then offer a prayer of absolution, through which God will forgive you your sins. He will usually say this: "God, the Father of Mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church, may God grant you pardon and peace. And I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." You respond by saying, "Amen."

6. Conclusion: The priest will probably say something like, “Go in peace,” to which you can respond “Amen” or “Thanks be to God.”

Common Catholic Prayers

SIGN OF THE CROSS

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OUR FATHER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL MARY

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER BEFORE MEALS

Bless us O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive, from thy bounty, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER TO OUR GUARDIAN ANGEL

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

MORNING OFFERING

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you all my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart, in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of all my relatives and friends and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father.

EVENING PRAYER

O my God, at the end of this day I thank you most heartily for all the graces I have received from you. I am sorry that I have not made a better use of them. I am sorry for all the sins I have committed against you. Forgive me, O my God, and graciously protect me this night. Blessed Virgin Mary, my dear heavenly mother, take me under your protection. St. Joseph, my dear guardian angel, and all you saints of God, pray for me. Sweet Jesus, have pity on all poor sinners, and save them from hell. Have mercy on the suffering souls in purgatory.

Endnotes

Introduction: Why We Believe . . . Anything

¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

Chapter 1: Why We Believe in Truth

² Only a few statements are *absolutely* true, or true in all times and all places. These include statements about logical contradictions like “there are no square circles” or “there are no married bachelors.”

³ “Penn Jillette gets the gift of a Bible.” Available online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=6md638smQd8

Chapter 2: Why We Believe in Science

⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1:64.

⁵ P. B. Medawar, *Advice to a Young Scientist* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 31.

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting of the Holy Father Benedict XVI with the Clergy of the Dioceses of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso, July 24, 2007, www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070724_clero-cadore_en.html.

⁷ Sheila Rabin, “Nicolaus Copernicus,” in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2010 ed., plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/copernicus/.

⁸ This is found in Niccolini’s February 13 and April 16 letters in 1633 to the king of Tuscany.

⁹ Pew Research Forum, “Scientists and Belief,” November 5, 2009, www.pewforum.org/2009/11/05/scientists-and-belief/.

¹⁰ J. L. Heilbron, *The Sun in the Church: Cathedrals as Solar Observatories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 3.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 1814. The *Catechism* is a summary of what Catholics believe.

¹² See also CCC 142-165 for a more comprehensive description of faith from a Catholic perspective.

¹³ I owe this example to philosopher Timothy McGrew.

Chapter 3: Why We Believe in a Creator

¹⁴ This is called the Kalām cosmological argument. For more, see chapters nine and ten of my book *Answering Atheism* (2013).

¹⁵ While the Big Bang is still the majority view, it is incomplete. Scientists have proposed new mechanisms such as “inflation” to account for irregularities in this standard model such as the flatness problem or the horizon problem. Scientists also need a quantum theory of gravity to account for the universe’s structure at the Big Bang itself because relativity theory becomes incapable of describing the singularity prior to what is called the Planck time, or 10^{-43} seconds.

¹⁶ Lisa Grossman, “Why Physicists Can’t Avoid a Creation Event,” *New Scientist Magazine*, January 11, 2012. In their original paper, Audrey Mithani and Alexander Vilenkin write, “Did the universe have a beginning? At this point, it seems that the answer to this question is probably yes.” Mithani and Vilenkin, “Did The Universe Have a Beginning?,” Cornell University Library, High Energy Physics—Theory, 2012, arxiv.org/abs/1204.4658.

¹⁷ For more information, see John Farrell, *The Day Without a Yesterday: Einstein, Lemaître, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2005), 115. Farrell cautiously

notes, “There is some confusion as to the extent of Einstein’s enthusiasm for Lemaître’s primeval atom theory . . . Encouraging as Einstein was, it’s unlikely that he regarded Lemaître’s primeval atom theory as the last word on the subject—and unlikelier still that he would have employed the word ‘creation’ to describe it.”

¹⁸ Quoted in Michio Kaku, *Parallel Worlds: A Journey through Creation, Higher Dimensions, and the Future of the Cosmos* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), 69-70.

¹⁹ David Albert, “On the Origin of Everything: ‘A Universe from Nothing by Lawrence Krauss,’” *New York Times Book Review*, March 23, 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/books/review/a-universe-from-nothing-by-lawrence-m-krauss.html?_r=0.

²⁰ This is called the fine-tuning argument. For more, see chapters eleven and twelve of my book *Answering Atheism* (2013).

²¹ Alexander Vilenkin, *Many Worlds in One* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 10.

²² Some people say our universe can be fine-tuned by chance if it is one universe within a larger collection of universes called the “multiverse.” Within this collection there would be trillions of dead universes and maybe just one universe like ours that has life. But aside from the lack of evidence for the multiverse, there are bigger problems with this explanation of fine-tuning. Paul Davies, an accomplished non-Christian physicist, explains: “Can the multiverse provide a complete and closed account of all physical existence? Not quite. The multiverse comes with a lot of baggage, such as an overarching space and time to host all those bangs, a universe-generating mechanism to trigger them, physical fields to populate the universes with material stuff, and a selection of forces to make things happen. Cosmologists embrace these features by envisaging sweeping ‘meta-laws’ that pervade the multiverse and spawn specific bylaws on a universe-by-universe basis. The meta-laws themselves remain unexplained—eternal, immutable, transcendent entities that just happen to exist and must simply be accepted as given. In that respect the meta-laws have a similar status to an unexplained transcendent god.” Paul Davies, “Stephen Hawking’s Big Bang Gaps,” *Guardian*, September 3, 2010, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/sep/04/stephen-hawking-big-bang-gap.

²³ Assume for simplicity that the odds of getting a royal flush are one in a million (it’s closer to one in 650,000). The odds of getting fifty royal flushes in a row would be $(1/10^6)^{50}$, which leave us with $1/10^{300}$. This comes nowhere near physicist Roger Penrose’s number for the odds of our universe having low enough disorder to allow life to exist ($1/10^{10^{123}}$). Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 147.

²⁴ Lisa Dyson, Matthew Kleban, and Leonard Susskind, “Disturbing Implications of a Cosmological Constant,” Cornell University Library, High Energy Physics—Theory, 2002, arxiv.org/abs/hep-th/0208013.

Chapter 4: Why We Believe in God

²⁵ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, Book XII.

²⁶ CCC 239, 270.

Chapter 5: Why We Believe God Conquers Evil

²⁷ Nick Vujicic, *Life Without Limits* (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 34.

²⁸ J.L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1982), 115.

²⁹ Available online at http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.

³⁰ Some people say that morality can’t be grounded in God because if God commanded us to do something evil, like torture a child, it wouldn’t become moral just because God commanded it. Therefore, something over and above God must exist in order to ground morality and determine

these acts are objectively evil. But because God is a perfect and infinite being who exists without limit or flaw, he will necessarily command only good acts that correspond with his perfect nature. God could never will us to do anything evil, because he is goodness itself and desires that we be made holy because he is holy (1 Pet. 1:16). The *Catechism*, quoting St. Thomas Aquinas, teaches that “God’s almighty power is in no way arbitrary: ‘In God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are all identical. Nothing therefore can be in God’s power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect’” (CCC 271).

³¹ Jennifer Jackson, *Ethics in Medicine: Virtue, Vice, and Medicine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 140.

Chapter 6: Why We Believe in Jesus

³² I owe this insight to the Christian philosopher Randal Rauser.

³³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.3; see also 20.9.1.

³⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44.

³⁵ Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 4.

³⁶ From “The Buddha’s Farewell Address” in Paul Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha, Compiled from Ancient Records* (Chicago and London: Open Court Publishing Company, 1915).

³⁷ This copy is called Codex Sinaiticus because it was discovered in a monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai.

³⁸ For a defense of the reliability of the Gospels see Craig Blomberg’s *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007) and *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2011).

³⁹ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments: How We Got Our English Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1984), 78.

⁴⁰ Therese de Lisieux. *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, 3rd ed., trans. John Clarke (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1996), 100-101.

Chapter 7: Why We Believe in the Resurrection

⁴¹ John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2009), 163.

⁴² Gerd Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus?*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 80.

⁴³ William Edwards, Wesley Gabel, and Floyd Hosmer, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 255, no. 11 (March 21, 1986), 1457.

⁴⁴ The skeleton belongs to Yehohanan of the village Giv’at Ha-Mivtar. Matthew W. Maslen and Piers D. Mitchell, “Medical Theories on the Cause of Death in Crucifixion,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 99, no. 4 (2006), 185-88.

⁴⁵ Gary R. Habermas and J.P. Moreland, *Immortality: The Other Side of Death* (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson, 1992), 60.

⁴⁶ Gary R. Habermas and Antony Flew, “My Pilgrimage from Atheism to Theism: An Exclusive Interview with Former British Atheist Professor Antony Flew,” *Faculty Publications and Presentations of Liberty University Paper*, 2004, 333.

⁴⁷ Buddha is recorded as saying in Sutta 11.5 of the Digha Nikaya, “Seeing the danger of such miracles, I dislike, reject and despise them.” Sura 13:7 of the Qu’ran says, “Those who disbelieved say, ‘Why has a sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?’ You are only a warner, and for every people is a guide.” Muhammad’s role was simply to preach about Allah, not perform any

miracles.

⁴⁸ Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 2004), 70.

⁴⁹ St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter CVIII.

⁵⁰ Talmud, Sotah 3:4, 19a (cited in Rachel Keren, “Torah Study,” in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, March 20, 2009, Jewish Women’s Archive, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/torah-study>); and Talmud Rosh Hashanah, 22a.

⁵¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.8.15.

⁵² Pope St. Clement, a disciple of St. Peter, wrote in his letter to the Corinthians that Peter, for example, “through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labors, and when he had finally suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance . . . and suffered martyrdom under the prefects” (*First Clement*, 5:4-5). St. Polycarp of Smyrna, who was a disciple of St. John, describes Jesus’ endurance till death and similarly exhorts believers to “practice all endurance, which also you saw with your own eyes in the blessed Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus, and in others also who came from among yourselves, as well as in Paul himself and the rest of the apostles” (*Letter to the Philippians*, 9.1). Because Clement and Polycarp personally knew the apostles, we can have a high degree of confidence in their testimony that St. Peter and St. John were indeed martyred. Finally, Josephus records that James, whom he describes as “the brother of Jesus,” was stoned by Caiaphas the high priest for transgressing the law (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1).

Chapter 8: Why We Believe in the Trinity

⁵³ Some Mormons claim that the reason they pray only to the Father (whom they call “Heavenly Father”) is because Jesus taught his disciples to address their prayers to “our Father” and because Jesus told his disciples to “ask of the Father in my name.” Of course, just because Jesus gave us one way to pray does not mean that is the only way to pray. After all, Mormons give thanks to Heavenly Father even though Jesus never showed his followers through the Lord’s Prayer how to give thanks to God. It seems more likely that Mormons only pray to the Father because they are following the prescription in the Book of Mormon, where Jesus says, “Ye must always pray unto the Father in my name” (3 Nephi 18:19).

⁵⁴ Mormons believe that we (along with Jesus) are all God’s spirit children. But as one Mormon apologetics website admits, “[I]t is technically true to say that Jesus and Satan are ‘brothers,’ in the sense that both have the same spiritual parent, God the Father” (en.fairmormon.org/Jesus_Christ/Brother_of_Satan). The belief that we will become Gods is a consequence of the fact that Mormons believe God and man are of the same species. Human beings are simply less developed gods and have the potential to be “exalted,” or become gods—provided they follow the teachings of the Church of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith said in the King Follett sermon, “Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation.” For more, see my booklet *20 Answers: Mormonism*.

⁵⁵ In Isaiah 44:8 God says, “Is there a God besides me? I know not any.” If the God of this world were omniscient, then wouldn’t he know about the God that he worshipped when he was a man? God also makes it clear in Isaiah 43:10 that “Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” This can’t refer to false gods or idols, because many of those are still “formed” to this day. Instead, the Bible teaches that no other God besides the one true God has ever existed, and no other

God ever will exist. The New Testament also firmly teaches there is only one God. Jesus described God as “the only God” (John 5:44) and “the only true God” (John 17:3). St. Paul describes God as “the only wise God” (Rom. 16:27) and the only being who possesses immortality (1 Tim. 6:16).

⁵⁶ “[T]he scriptures point to the resurrected Jesus Christ as the chief of all angels—Michael the archangel.” “Who is Michael the Archangel?” *Awake!* February 8, 2002, 17, <http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/102002085>. However, the Bible teaches that Jesus is not an angel, so this claim is false (Heb. 1:4-6).

⁵⁷ The Greek word for “firstborn,” *prototokos*, can refer to a special position someone has that is worthy of honor and privilege, and not only to the literal order of birth among siblings. For example, in Psalm 89:27 God says of David, “I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth.” Obviously, David was not the first king to reign among the kings of the Earth. He was instead placed in a position of preeminence or authority over all other kings. But just as the firstborn of kings is the one who rules over kings, it follows that the firstborn of creation, or Jesus, as Colossians 1:15 describes him, is the one who rules over creation.

⁵⁸ When the Bible says, “God raised Jesus from the dead,” it refers to the Father, the Son (John 2:19-21), and the Holy Spirit all raising him from the dead. See also CCC 648.

⁵⁹ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 2.

Chapter 9: Why We Believe in the Bible

⁶⁰ CCC 390.

⁶¹ William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans), 202.

⁶² Jeffrey H. Schwartz, *What the Bones Tell Us* (New York: Henry Holt, 2015), 29-30.

⁶³ Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on Romanism by Bible Christians* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 126.

⁶⁴ St. Augustine, *Against the Fundamental Epistle of Manichaeus*, 5.

Chapter 10: Why We Aren’t Bible-Only Christians

⁶⁵ Another verse that is cited in defense of *sola scriptura* is Acts 17:11, which describes how the Jews in Berea “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if [Paul’s teaching was true].” But the Jews in Thessalonica were not ignorant of Scripture. They just opposed Paul’s interpretation of Scripture because he “reasoned” and “proved” from it that Jesus was the Messiah. The Bereans, on the other hand, were more “noble” because they were open-minded and saw that Scripture was a witness to Paul’s preaching. Luke even acknowledges that “the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea” (Acts 17:13), which means that the word of God is not confined to written words alone.

⁶⁶ The *Catechism* says, “The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus’ teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit” (CCC 83).

⁶⁷ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1:10:2, 3:4:1.

⁶⁸ It was also defined in the face of Protestant criticism of the canon at the ecumenical Council of Trent (1545-1563).

⁶⁹ Douglas Wilson, “A Severed Branch,” *Credenda Agenda* 12, no. 1, www.credenda.org/archive/issues/12-1thema.php.

⁷⁰ Eusebius, *Church History*, 4:23:11.

⁷¹ R.C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology? Understanding the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005), 54.

⁷² Consider the group that wants to remove from the Bible the story about Jesus having mercy on the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11), www.conservapedia.com/Essay:Adulteress_Story.

⁷³ For a defense of the inspiration of the deuterocanonical books see Gary Michuta, *The Case for the Deuterocanon: Evidence and Arguments* (Livonia, Mich.: Nikaria Press, 2015).

⁷⁴ See 2 Maccabees 12:46 for one example.

⁷⁵ St. Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitory*, 2.5

Chapter 11: Why We Belong to the Catholic Church

⁷⁶ St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 8.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Pope St. Clement, *Letter to the Corinthians*, 44:1-3.

⁷⁹ St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 65.

⁸⁰ St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Trallians*, 2:1.

⁸¹ Tertullian, *Baptism*, 1.

⁸² Origen, *Commentaries on Romans* 5:9.

⁸³ St. Cyprian, *The Lapsed*, 28.

⁸⁴ Pope St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 52.

⁸⁵ The text describes the servant as a eunuch. A eunuch was a man who had been castrated so that he could be trusted to guard female members of the royal family and not become sexually involved with them. In the ancient world it also referred to men who were impotent or otherwise incapable of engaging in sexual intercourse.

⁸⁶ John Calvin, *A Treatise of the Eternal Predestination Of God*, 38.

⁸⁷ St. Augustine, *Against the Letter of Mani Called "The Foundation,"* 4:5.

Chapter 12: Why We Have a Pope

⁸⁸ J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Popes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

⁸⁹ Didn't Peter refer to himself as a "fellow elder" and not as "pope" in 1 Peter 5:1? Yes, but in this passage Peter is demonstrating humility, which he is encouraging other priests to practice. He wrote, "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another" (5:5), so exalting his status would have contradicted his message. Addressing his audience as "fellow elders" no more invalidates his leadership than when the president addresses the nation as "my fellow Americans." Besides, St. Paul often referred to himself as a mere deacon (1 Cor. 3:5, 2 Cor. 11:23) and even said he was "the very least of all the saints" (Eph. 3:8)—but that did not take away from his authority as an apostle.

⁹⁰ Craig Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 426.

⁹¹ Some people quote Pope Leo X (1513-1521) as saying, "How profitable that fable of Christ has been to us and our company," to show that a medieval pope was the Antichrist because he thought Jesus was a myth created to justify the existence of a power-hungry Church. But the problem with this quote is that while it does come from the sixteenth century, Pope Leo X never said it. This quote actually comes from the Protestant dissenter John Bale's satirical book *The Pageant of Popes*, and was an amateur attempt to smear the Roman pontiff's character.

⁹² Jesus speaks of "you all" with the Greek word *hymas* in verse 31, but in the next verse Jesus uses the Greek word *sou*, which is the singular "you" in reference to Peter.

⁹³ In this situation Peter, at most, made an error in behavior, not teaching. Peter feared antagonism from Christians who thought circumcision was necessary for salvation. So, while he was in their presence, Peter declined to eat with the uncircumcised. Paul criticized Peter for doing this, but Paul

himself accommodated this same group when he had his disciple Timothy circumcised. Paul did this to make it easier to preach to the Jews (Acts 16:1-3), but he called circumcision a grave sin in Galatians 5:2. Therefore, if prudentially yielding to critics doesn't invalidate St. Paul's authority, then neither does it invalidate St. Peter's.

⁹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 145.

⁹⁵ St. Cyprian, *Epistle*, 54.14

⁹⁶ Eusebius, *Church History*, 4:23:9

⁹⁷ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.2

⁹⁸ Prosper, Account I, sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/attila2.asp.

Chapter 13: Why We Have Priests

⁹⁹ This account comes from third-class passenger Helen Mary Mocklare and was published in the *New York World* on April 22, 1912.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Pronechen, "Father Thomas Byles: God's Faithful Servant on the Titanic," *National Catholic Register*, April 15, 2015, www.ncregister.com/daily-news/father-thomas-byles-gods-faithful-servant-on-the-titanic.

¹⁰¹ St. Cyprian, *The Lapsed*, 28.

¹⁰² The Church does not teach that women are inferior to men and that is why they cannot be priests. God's eternal wisdom is personified as a woman (Prov. 8) and in Galatians 3:28 Paul says that in Christ there is no difference in value between men and women. At the end of his letter to the Romans, St. Paul refers to various women who acted as coworkers with him in the field of evangelization (Rom. 16). The Church even recognizes that the one creature who deserves to be praised more than any other is a woman—Mary, the Mother of God. But this does not contradict the Church's practice of imitating Christ, who only selected men to be apostles even though many women supported his ministry. Some people say Jesus chose only men to be apostles because that was expected in the culture of his time, but Jesus routinely contradicted the cultural sensitivities of his day. Priestesses were common in ancient mystery religions, yet St. Paul firmly taught that women could not have the same leadership positions in the Church as men (1 Cor. 11:35). Men and women are equal in dignity but they are not identical, so it makes sense God would call each to different vocations.

¹⁰³ Some argue that 1 Corinthians 9:5 proves that Peter had a wife during Paul's missionary journeys. Karl Keating responds in this way: "The key Greek words in 1 Corinthians 9:5 are '*adelphai* *gunaika*.' The first means 'sister,' and the second can be translated as either 'woman' or 'wife.' This means the phrase translates as 'sister woman' or 'sister wife,' with 'sister' indicating not a biological but a spiritual relationship." See Karl Keating, "Did Peter Have a Wife," *Catholic Answers Magazine* 18, no. 5, May 2007, www.catholic.com/magazine/articles/did-peter-have-a-wife.

¹⁰⁴ A. Jones, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ According to St Matthew," in B. Orchard and E. F. Sutcliffe, eds., *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1953), 885.

Chapter 14: Why We Go to Mass

¹⁰⁵ Earlier in John's Gospel Jesus used a metaphor involving food that his disciples misunderstood. Jesus said he had food to eat, to which the disciples essentially asked, "Who brought Jesus' lunch" (and maybe wondered, "Why didn't they get us anything!"). Jesus corrected them, saying that he was being metaphorical. He explained, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). But in John 6, when people began to abandon Jesus over the supposed metaphor of "eating his flesh," Jesus does not say, "Wait, it's just a metaphor!" Instead he reaffirmed the difficulty of his teaching, and his disciples stood by him because they knew there was

no one else they could go to who had the words of eternal life (John 6:68).

¹⁰⁶ St. Ignatius, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 7.

¹⁰⁷ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), 440.

¹⁰⁸ Jesus said to take the Eucharist “in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19), but he did not mean the Eucharist was only a symbolic representation of him. The word translated “in memory” comes from the Greek word *anamnesis*, which means “to offer a memorial sacrifice.” It refers to making something present through a sacrifice. In this case, the body of Jesus Christ is made present when the priest presents to the Father the one sacrifice of Christ, our paschal lamb, under the form of bread and wine. See also Stephen K. Ray, *Crossing the Tiber: Evangelical Protestants Discover the Historical Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 210.

¹⁰⁹ Mass is called the “holy sacrifice” because “it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church’s offering . . .

it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross” (CCC 1330,1336). Even though Christ said on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30), this does not mean nothing else needs to be done to secure our salvation. Romans 8:34 says Christ, at this very moment, intercedes for us before the Father. Representing Christ’s sacrifice to the Father does not take away from the unique, saving effect of that sacrifice any more than Christ’s current intercession for us takes away from what he did on the cross.

¹¹⁰ *Didache*, 14. Hebrews 13:10 also reveals that Christians “have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat,” which means that Christians have a sacrifice to offer God. Those who “serve the tent” are the Jewish priests in the Temple who were not allowed to receive the sacrifice of the Eucharist, which only Christians could receive.

¹¹¹ Peter Kreeft, “What I Learned from a Muslim About Eucharistic Adoration,” catholicity.com, April 21, 2011.

¹¹² St. Tarcisius, Martyr, www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/TARCISI.htm. Taken from Berchmans Bittle, *A Saint a Day According to the Liturgical Calendar of the Church* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1958).

Chapter 15: Why We Baptize Babies

¹¹³ “For immersion in water, it was clear to him, could not be used for the forgiveness of sins, but as a sanctification of the body, and only if the soul was already thoroughly purified by right actions,” Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2.

¹¹⁴ “By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state. It is a sin that will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called ‘sin’ only in an analogical sense: it is a sin ‘contracted’ and not ‘committed’—a state and not an act” (CCC 404).

¹¹⁵ *The Didache*, 7.

¹¹⁶ St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 64.5.

Chapter 16: Why We Believe in Spite of Scandal

¹¹⁷ Pope St. Paul VI, *Solemnly Hac Liturgia*, 19. Cited in CCC 827.

¹¹⁸ “The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950-2002,” research study conducted by John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, February 2004, www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/The-Nature-and-Scope-of-Sexual-Abuse-of-Minors-by-Catholic-Priests-and-Deacons-in-the-United-States-1950-2002.pdf.

- ¹¹⁹ Electa Draper, “Scandal creates contempt for Catholic clergy” *Denver Post*, May 25, 2010, <http://blogs.denverpost.com/hark/2010/05/25/scandal-creates-contempt-for-catholic-clergy/39/>
- ¹²⁰ Pat Wingert, “Priests Commit No More Abuse Than Other Males,” *Newsweek*, April 7, 2010, www.newsweek.com/priests-commit-no-more-abuse-other-males-70625.
- ¹²¹ “Address of Dr. Monica Applewhite to the Irish Bishops,” March 10, 2009, www.themediareport.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Appleswhite-Ireland-Address-Bishops-2009.pdf.
- ¹²² Elisabetta Povoledo and Laurie Goodstein, “Pope Creates Tribunal for Bishop Negligence in Child Sexual Abuse Cases,” June 10, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/06/11/world/europe/pope-creates-tribunal-for-bishop-negligence-in-child-sexual-abuse-cases.html?_r=0.
- ¹²³ David Gibson, “10 Years After Catholic Sex Abuse Reforms, What’s Changed?,” *Washington Post*, June 6, 2012, www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/10-years-after-catholic-sex-abuse-reforms-whats-changed/2012/06/06/gJQAQMjOJV_story.html.
- ¹²⁴ Thomas F. Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), vii.
- ¹²⁵ Peter Lock, *The Routledge Companion to the Crusades* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 412.
- ¹²⁶ Cited in S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, eds., *The Crusades: A Reader*, 2nd. ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 35.
- ¹²⁷ Thomas E. Woods Jr., “The Myth of Hitler’s Pope: An Interview with Rabbi David G. Dalin,” *Catholic Exchange*, July 29, 2005, catholicexchange.com/the-myth-of-hitlers-pope-an-interview-with-rabbi-david-g-dalin.
- ¹²⁸ Julian the Apostate, *Letter to Arsacius*.
- ¹²⁹ Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 88.
- ¹³⁰ Anthony Fisher, *Catholic Bioethics for a New Millennium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 279-80.
- ¹³¹ Leprosy is now known as Hansen’s disease.
- ¹³² *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*, vol. 4, 106.

Chapter 17: Why We Believe in Faith Working Through Love

- ¹³³ For a good treatment of this issue see Jimmy Akin, *The Drama of Salvation* (San Diego, Calif.: Catholic Answers Press, 2015), especially chapter 2.
- ¹³⁴ “Despite repeated assurances that AIDS has been shown to be transmitted only through intimate sexual contact or through the exchange of blood, some neighbors remain fearful that the virus could be transmitted through the air. Others disapprove of the fact that the home is caring for gay men.” Sandra G. Boodman, “Neighbors Are Fearful of Nuns’ Caring for the Dying in Convent,” *Washington Post*, January 12, 1987, B01.
- ¹³⁵ Mae Elise Cannon, *Just Spirituality: How Faith Practices Fuel Social Action* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 19.

Chapter 18: Why We Believe in Purgatory

- ¹³⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), 108-109. Although Lewis was critical of some medieval conceptions of purgatory, he affirms the depiction of the sinner in Cardinal Newman’s poem “Dream of Gerontius,” seeking purification before God’s throne.
- ¹³⁷ See also CCC 1855-59.

¹³⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 47. For a thorough treatment of the good thief on the cross and its relation to purgatory, see Jim Blackburn, “Dismissing the Dismas Case,” *Catholic Answers Magazine*, 23, no. 2, March 2012.

¹³⁹ Martin Luther, *Defense and Explanations of All the Articles*, Article 37.

¹⁴⁰ In the Middle Ages one of the acts of charity that could be done to obtain an indulgence was to give money to the poor, or alms. Although this is a virtuous and good act, some people only saw it as a transaction and did not give money in a spirit of humble repentance for sin. Therefore, the Church removed almsgiving as a work associated with the granting of indulgences.

¹⁴¹ *Spe Salvi*, 47.

¹⁴² Some people say praying to saints violates Deuteronomy 18:11, which forbids the sin of necromancy. But that refers to using magic to summon the souls of the dead (like when Saul summoned Samuel’s soul from the dead with the help of the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28: 3-19). It is not always wrong to talk to the dead, since Jesus spoke with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration and Moses had been dead for centuries (Matt. 17:3).

Chapter 19: Why We Pray to Saints

¹⁴³ Paul also says that death does not separate us from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:39), so if we are all united to Christ, then we are united to one another in a bond of faith and love.

¹⁴⁴ William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 202.

¹⁴⁵ Even if the devil doesn’t personally tempt us, and only his demons do, Satan himself is organizing all of this. This means that, in order to lead his demonic kingdom, he has mental abilities that far surpass what humans in this life possess.

¹⁴⁶ St. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, 7:12.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (Oakland, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991), 38.

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth Vargas and Donna Hunter, “Miracle of Faith: The Work of a Saint?,” ABC News, April 2, 2010, abcnews.go.com/2020/miracle-faith-chase-kear-recovers-fatal-accident-prayers/story?id=10239513.

Chapter 20: Why We Honor Mary

¹⁴⁹ When God the Son became man, he remained a divine person with a divine nature. In becoming man, however, he assumed an additional human nature and was conceived in Mary’s womb, from which he was born.

¹⁵⁰ Timothy George, “The Blessed Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective,” *Mary, Mother of God*, eds., Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 110.

¹⁵¹ See *Luther’s Commentary on The Magnificat*. Cited in Beth Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary: Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in Lutheran Sermons of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 53.

¹⁵² John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, section 39.

¹⁵³ This word is used to describe Abram and his nephew Lot (Gen. 14:14) as well as the cousins of Moses and Aaron (Lev. 10:4).

¹⁵⁴ “According to Scripture and ancient Jewish tradition, Mary belonged to the father of her child—the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit could not be the protector that Mary needed. The Holy Spirit could not sign legal documents and be Mary’s legal spouse. But Joseph was ready and willing—just man that he was—to care for Mary as his lawfully wedded spouse.” Tim Staples, *Behold Your Mother: A Biblical and Historical Defense of the Marian Doctrines* (San Diego, Calif.: Catholic

Answers Press, 2014), 247.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 83-103.

¹⁵⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:22:24.

Chapter 21: Why We Protect Life

¹⁵⁷ *Didache*, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 28.

¹⁵⁹ Pope St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 99.

¹⁶⁰ Ronan R. O’Rahilly and Fabiola Müller, *Human Embryology & Teratology*, third edition. (New York: Wiley-Liss, 2001), 8. The full quote reads: “Although human life is a continuous process, fertilization (which, incidentally, is not a ‘moment’) is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is formed when the chromosomes of the male and female pronuclei blend in the oocyte.”

¹⁶¹ Some people understand why abortion is wrong, but still think assisted suicide is okay. They say, “The baby never had a choice, but shouldn’t someone in terrible pain be allowed to die if that’s what he wants?” Catholics believe everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and have access to treatment for pain. It’s even okay to give a dying person pain medication that, as an unintended side effect, speeds up the natural process of dying. But we rob sick people of their dignity when we say that healthy people deserve to be talked out of suicide because they have “lives worth living,” but the sick or disabled are better off ending their own lives. By making it legal to help someone end his life, this pressures other sick and disabled people, who may feel like they are a burden on their loved ones, to do the same thing. We euthanize sick and unwanted pets because even though we don’t want them to suffer we don’t believe it is appropriate to treat their suffering with expensive medicine or round-the-clock human care. But shouldn’t *humans* receive appropriate levels of human care? That is why the Church encourages doctors to kill disease or kill pain, but not to kill their own patients.

¹⁶² Richard Stith, “Arguing with Pro-Choicers,” *First Things*, November 4, 2006, www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2006/11/stith-arguing-with-pro-choicer.

¹⁶³ In Stith’s original essay he uses the example of a jaguar that has leaped back into dense jungle foliage. My friend and fellow pro-life colleague Stephanie Gray combines Stith’s argument with the example of the Loch Ness monster.

¹⁶⁴ Bernard Nathanson, *The Hand of God* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1996), 58-60. Nathanson admits that at the time, “I had no feelings aside from the sense of accomplishment, the pride of expertise.”

¹⁶⁵ Bernard Nathanson, *Aborting America* (Pinnacle Books, 1981), 193.

¹⁶⁶ Nathanson, *The Hand of God*, 202.

Chapter 22: Why We Cherish Our Sexuality

¹⁶⁷ Juve Shiver, Jr., “Television Awash in Sex, Study Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 2005.

¹⁶⁸ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 272.

¹⁶⁹ For this particular argument I am indebted to the writings of Karol Wojtyla, Christopher West, Janet Smith, and Alex Pruss.

¹⁷⁰ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 6:13.

¹⁷¹ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.

¹⁷² This example comes from Sherif Gergis, Robert George, and Ryan Anderson, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 25.

¹⁷³ Daniel T. Lichter, Katherine Michelmores, Richard N. Turner, and Sharon Sassler, “Pathways to a

Stable Union? Pregnancy and Childbearing Among Cohabiting and Married Couples,” *Population Research and Policy Review*, 35, no. 3 (June 2016), 377-99.

Chapter 23: Why We Defend Marriage

¹⁷⁴ *Code of Canon Law*, 1055.

¹⁷⁵ Wendy Wang and Kim Parker, “Record Share of Americans Have Never Married,” Pew Research Center, September, 24, 2014, [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/)

[never-married/](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/).

¹⁷⁶ “In 1963, as President Lyndon Johnson was launching the War on

Poverty, 7 percent of American children were born outside marriage . . .

According to CDC, a record 40.6 percent of children born in 2008 were born outside marriage—a total of 1.72 million children.” Robert Rector, “National Review: Out Of Wedlock,” NPR, April 12, 2010, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=125848718. “The percentage of all births to unmarried women was 40.2% in 2014, down from 40.6% in 2013, the lowest level since 2007. This percentage peaked in 2009 at 41.0%. In 2014, the percentage of nonmarital births varied widely among population groups, from 16.4% for [Asian Pacific Islander] mothers to 70.9% for non-Hispanic black mothers.” Hamilton, et al. “Births: Final Data for 2014” National Vital Statistics Reports Volume 64, Number 12, December 23, 2015, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_12.pdf.

¹⁷⁷ Rose M. Kreider and Renee Ellis, “Living Arrangements of Children: 2009,” United States Census Bureau, June 2011, <https://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p70-126.pdf>.

¹⁷⁸ D. L. Blackwell, “Family Structure and Children’s Health in the United States: Findings from the National Health Interview Survey, 2001-2007,” National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Health Statistics* 10 (2010), 246. Cited in *Family Structure*, December 2015, www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/59_Family_Structure.pdf.

¹⁷⁹ W. Bradford Wilcox, “Suffer the Little Children: Cohabitation and the Abuse of America’s Children,” *Public Discourse*, April 22, 2011, www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2011/04/3181/.

¹⁸⁰ In the parallel passage in Matthew 19:9, Jesus says, “whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.” Scholars debate the meaning of “unchastity,” but it probably refers to adultery that takes place after the betrothal period but before the consummation of the marriage, or it may refer to sexually unlawful marriages that involve close relatives.

¹⁸¹ According to the *Catechism*, “Between the baptized, ‘a ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death.’ The separation of spouses while maintaining the marriage bond can be legitimate in certain cases provided for by canon law. If civil divorce remains the only possible way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of inheritance, it can be tolerated and does not constitute a moral offense.” The *Catechism* goes on to affirm, though, that “Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death” (CCC 2382-84).

¹⁸² The full text says, “Then Judah said to Onan, ‘Go in to your brother’s wife, and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.’ But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother’s wife he spilled the semen on the ground, lest he should give offspring to his brother. And what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord, and he slew him also (Gen. 38:8-10). Normally in the Old Testament the punishment for not raising up

children for a deceased brother (or practicing Levirate marriage) was public shaming (Deut. 25:5-10). The fact that the Lord slew Onan is evidence that he was displeased with the way Onan disobeyed his law, that is, by practicing contraception.

¹⁸³ “Known and Probable Human Carcinogens,” *American Cancer Society*, November 3, 2016, www.cancer.org/cancer/cancercauses/othercarcinogens/generalinformationaboutcarcinogens/known-and-probable-human-carcinogens.

¹⁸⁴ M. A. Wilson, “The Practice of Natural Family Planning Versus the Use of Artificial Birth Control: Family, Moral and Sexual Issues,” *Catholic Social Science Review*, 7 (2005), 185-211.

¹⁸⁵ “Holy Mass and Canonization of the Blessed: Vincenzo Grossi, Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Ludovico Martin and Maria Azelia Guérin,” Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis, October 18, 2005, w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20151018_omelia-canonizzazioni.html.

¹⁸⁶ Ferdinand Holböck, *Married Saints and Blessed: Through the Centuries* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 411.

Chapter 24: Why We Believe in Hell

¹⁸⁷ Caryle Murphy, “Most Americans Believe in Heaven . . . and Hell,” Pew Research Center, November 10, 2015, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/10/most-americans-believe-in-heaven-and-hell/.

¹⁸⁸ In the Old Testament the word “hell” usually referred to *sheol*, or the abode of the dead. The Church teaches that after his Crucifixion, Christ preached to the spirits in *sheol* (1 Pet. 4:6), an event the Apostles’ Creed refers to as Christ’s “descent into hell.” Regarding this event, the *Catechism* clearly says, “Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him” (CCC 633).

¹⁸⁹ Gehenna was in the valley of Hinnom, which 2 Kings 23:10 and Jeremiah 7:31-32 refer to as a site of child sacrifice.

¹⁹⁰ Pope St. John Paul II, General Audience, July 28, 1999.

¹⁹¹ In contrast to the traditional view of hell, “annihilationists” say hell is temporary and God will eventually destroy the damned. They claim the Greek word rendered “eternal” in this passage, *aionios*, means “age” or “a long period of time” and doesn’t necessarily mean “forever.” But Matthew always uses this word to mean “eternal.” Also, in this context Jesus is making a comparison between the eternal life the righteous will enjoy forever and the eternal punishment the wicked will endure forever. The comparison doesn’t make sense if the wicked are destroyed and don’t have an everlasting existence like the righteous will. Others argue that the Greek word rendered “punishment,” *kolasin*, is derived from a word that means to “prune” or “cut off.” Therefore, hell is just separation from God by being annihilated or destroyed. It is not eternal, conscious punishment. But analyzing a word’s meaning from its etymology can lead to gross errors. After all, the word “virtue” is derived from the Latin word *vir*, which means “man,” but that doesn’t mean all virtuous people are “manly” people. As any Greek dictionary will tell you, *kolasin* just means “punishment” and *kolasin aionion* means “eternal” or “everlasting punishment.”

¹⁹² Tertullian, *A Treatise on the Soul*, 31.

¹⁹³ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II.33.1.

¹⁹⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 45.

Chapter 25: Why We Believe in Heaven

¹⁹⁵ Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 49.

¹⁹⁶ Pope John Paul II, General Audience, July 28, 1999.

¹⁹⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 16. This paragraph also says, “nor does divine providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with his grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She knows that it is given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life. But often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become vain in their reasonings and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator.”

About the Author

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