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# Good Morning, Good People!

May the Lord give you peace!

The editors of THE CORD prayerfully wish all our readers a very blessed and joyous Easter.

During this glorious season of the year, the Church's liturgy again recalls to our minds the appearances of the risen Savior to His disciples before He ascended into heaven. The body which His followers saw was the same one with which they had become familiar before the resurrection. But it was now glorified by properties which it had not enjoyed previously. The risen Jesus, still in the world, was no longer of the world.

This transformed condition of Christ's risen body offers a graphic model of the state of our souls by reason of baptism. Still human, they are infused with new beauty and new capabilities. The Christian is very definitely in the world, but he is no longer of the world.

Just as the glorified state of our Lord's body witnessed to the fact of His resurrection from the dead, so should the grace-endowed Catholic manifest his elevation to the divine life by his very presence in the world. Through our ordinary, daily, human activities there should shine the glow of divinity. Our attitudes, our judgments, our decisions, should reflect in every area of our lives the inner life of the Spirit.

Our Blessed Savior did not discard His natural body and appear to His disciples in a thoroughly new form; rather, the body which was His before death was transformed; suffused with glory, after His resurrection. Just so, the activity of our own grace-life is not something which takes the place of the functioning of our natural personality. We did not cast nature aside when we were called to grace. It is our task, rather, to accept that personality which nature has given us, to use it in such a way that its gift of grace shines through, and thereby to witness before the world that God lives in His creatures.

*The Editors*

# The King's Good Servant, and God's

*Marcellus A. McCartney, O.F.M.*

We do not know all that the future has in store for us. One thing, however, we do know. Of at least one thing we are sure. We are going to die.

Yeas, amid all the uncertainty that surrounds us in this modern age, of at least one thing we are sure: we are going to die.

And surely the saddest moment in any man's life must be this moment of death, if he approaches it with the knowledge that he is going to God with empty hands, or if he dies with the realization that he could have done so much more for God if only he had used a little more push.

But life need not come to a close on such a note. If we want to be practical men and women in this modern practical age, we can and should really do something about this inevitable fact of death. We can and should really put God first, and everything else in subordination to

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Him. In other words, we can and should really accept the divine challenge which Jesus has hurled at us, really pick up the gauntlet which He has thrown at our feet: "You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mtt. 5:48). To be holy with the holiness of God — that is the challenge.

How many times have you heard a married man say, especially when the going gets rough, that he should have entered a monastery? How many times have you heard the mother of a family say, especially when discouragement threatens to take over, that she should have become a nun? Now, all that sort of talk is just plain nonsense — understandable, of course — but just plain nonsense, all the same.

The good God, in His divine providence, has placed each and every one of us in the particular century in which we live, in the particular vocation as priest, religious, or layman in which we walk, in the particular environment in which we work out our destiny. And it is in these circumstances that God wants us to become saints.

It is impractical and a waste of precious time to bewail our lot, and to judge that things would be so much better if we were transplanted to greener grass. We are *here*; the opportunities are *here*; God's grace is *here*. The practical thing to do is to take God at His word, to take ourselves as we are, to give ourselves to Him, and to get going!

Others have done it. Why can't we?

How are we to go about it? Our Lord Himself has given us the clue. The night before He died, He prayed to His Father, "I have glorified thee on earth; I have accomplished the work that thou hast given me to do" (Jn. 17:4). That's the simple secret of eternal success: to do the work that God has given us; to do a good job — but really a good job — in every department and in every moment of our lives.

That's what Saint Thomas More did. Why can't you? On the day of his death, he could and did paraphrase the Master in his own immortal words: "I die the King's good servant, but God's first."

If anyone wants to be a saint (and don't we all?) here is a worthy model. He is "a man for all seasons," a saint for all times. Here he is: the married saint, the human saint, the merry saint, the scholarly saint, the

lawyer saint, the politician saint — take your pick.

To be a saint it is not essential to be an eccentric. Far from it. Saint Thomas More was certainly no eccentric. In 1519, Erasmus of Rotterdam, close friend and admirer of More, wrote of him, "He seems born and framed for friendship, and is a most faithful and enduring friend. He is easy of access to all. . . . In a word, if you want a perfect model of friendship, you will find it in no better than in More" (Maynard, *Humanist as Hero*, pp. 55-6). In 1524, another contemporary penned the following lines: "More is a man of angel's wit and singular learning. I know not his fellow. For where is a man of that gentleness, lowliness, and affability? And, as time requireth, a man of marvelous mirth and pastimes, and sometimes as of sad gravity. A man for all seasons" (*Idem*, p. 124). And much more recently, someone "quoted a friend to the effect that, of all the saints, Thomas More was the only one with whom he could possibly imagine spending a pleasant social evening" (Herr, "The Man Who Wouldn't Conform," *The Sign*, Jan., 1964, p. 22).

That last quotation is at least a tremendous tribute to the warmth of Saint Thomas More. Even a casual acquaintance with

his life will convince anyone that it would have been pleasant indeed to spend an evening with him socially. He was congenial, gracious, and affable. In his case, conversation was an art, and he was proficient at it. Having used to the full all the talents which God had given him (and God had given him many), he knew something about practically everything, and could talk about it interestingly. Were he alive today, he would be able to make a valuable contribution to any conversation on the population explosion, automation, labor unions, fringe benefits, the threat in southeast Asia, NATO, missiles, and everything else that is current. But withal he remained very humble. Furthermore, not the least of his virtues was his merry disposition; he was loved by all who knew him. One biographer has referred to him as "the most cheerful man in all England," and "the most popular man of his time" (Maynard, *op. cit.*, p. 108).

Even his penitential practices were hidden, so that they interfered in no way with the innocent pastime and enjoyment of others. If, for example, the occasion called for wine, he would unobtrusively raise the glass to his lips without drinking its contents. And who would

ever have suspected that under his robes this merry man, whose very presence seemed to exude joy, wore a penitential hair shirt!

Saint Thomas More was born in London in 1478, and died there in 1535. Within that brief life span (he was only fifty-seven when he died) he tasted the sweetness and the bitterness of life, but neither the one nor the other turned him from God. The motto of this Franciscan tertiary could very well have been *In Holiness and Learning*. Both his holiness and his learning were authentic. He did not feel that he had to cultivate the one at the expense of the other, or reject the one to favor the other. He was deeply interested in the Renaissance learning of the sixteenth century, and as a true Christian, felt that this too, like everything else, should be oriented towards God. Permeated with the grace of God and cultivated for His love, holiness and learning went hand in hand.

This man did not live in any ivory tower, nor in any so-called superior isolation from his fellows. Because of his learning, his holiness, his tremendous love for God and for others, he was a man of intense commitment, a man involved in this world, as is evidenced by this private and his public life.

*Private life*

By profession Saint Thomas More was a lawyer. However, he did have thoughts about a vocation to the monastic life and/or the priesthood. Practical man that he was, he took steps to reach a decision. When he had been admitted to the bar as a young man of twenty-three, he went to live in the London Charterhouse of the Carthusians. He tried, as far as possible, to participate in the life of the monks, while at the same time pursuing his own profession of law. He remained there for about four years, and finally came to the decision that his vocation was to the married life. He married twice, his first wife having died after six years of marriage.

The life of prayer and penance, however, which he had learned and lived with the Carthusians, remained with him throughout his life. When he was at home, he recited morning and evening prayers in common with his wife and children. Every Friday he made a day of recollection. And it was his custom, on days of importance, to go to confession, assist at Mass, and receive Holy Communion (Roper, *Life of Sir Thomas More, Knt.*, p. 27, 71). One time, the Duke of Norfolk, coming to dine with him, found him singing in the church choir. At this

time, More was Lord Chancellor of England. The duke reproved him for thus dishonoring the king and the chancellorship. Saint Thomas smilingly assured him that the king would not be offended with him for serving God, the king's master (*Idem*, p. 50). Deeply religious all his life, he was the type to make religion attractive to others.

*Family Life*

When roughly twenty-seven, he married Jane Colt, a sweet young girl of about seventeen. And here, too, is an indication of More's gentle nature, of his desire never to inflict pain on another. Although attracted to one of her sisters, he decided to marry Jane, the eldest, because he thought it would have been to her grief and shame if the younger sister were chosen in preference to her! Roper quaintly writes: "He then, of a certain pity, framed his fancy toward her, and soon after married her (*op. cit.*, p. 6). It was a very happy marriage, and he loved his wife dearly. She gave him four children, three girls and a boy. After six years of married life, she died.

More now had a problem, and again the practical side of his nature came to the fore to solve it. Here he was a widower, at the age of thirty-two or so, with

four very young children. Much as he loved them, he could not possibly give them all the love, care, and sense of security that they needed; they had to have a mother's love as well. Within a month after his wife's death, therefore, he married Alice Middleton, a widow who was seven years his senior. She was a good wife to Thomas Moore, and a good mother to his children.

Saint Thomas More had a deep love for his family, especially for his eldest daughter, Margaret. And the love was mutual. It would almost seem that it must have been his ambition to be the best of fathers.

He wanted his children, his girls as well as the boy, and his adopted daughter as well as his ward, to have the best education possible. To this end, he had the school conducted in his own home, hired the teachers himself, and told these same teachers what he expected them to impart to his children in the way of knowledge and virtue.

This eminently practical nature of his revealed itself again when his daughters came of an age to marry. He did not want them to marry just any Tom, Dick, or Harry. Far from it. It was his desire that they make good matches, both from the material point of view and from the viewpoint of virtue. As a

matter of fact, they did marry well.

The tender and deep love of Saint Thomas More for his children is one of the most beautiful and touching facets of his life. His love and attachment to them could very well have occasioned a severe temptation to him during his imprisonment in the Tower of London, where he languished for some fifteen months. With death a certainty if he held on to his principles, and with the realization that merely by taking an oath acknowledging the king's supremacy as head of the Church in England, he would have been re-united with his family — yes, it would have been a great temptation! He loved his family, but he loved God first.

*Public Life*

London born and bred, he loved his native city and became involved in its social and civil affairs. Within a few years after his admission to the bar, he became a successful and well-known lawyer. His reputation for honesty was wide-spread. At the age of thirty-two he became a member of Parliament for the city of London, and, a little later in the same year, the Under-Sheriff of that city.

On several occasions he served as ambassador to the

European continent, at first for the merchants of London, and later for the interests of the English king. In 1518 he was made a member of the King's Council, in 1521 he was knighted, and in 1523 he became Speaker of the House of Commons.

The greatest dignity of all was conferred on him in 1529, when he was made Lord Chancellor of England. This was the highest public office which any man could have attained in England, short of a revolution, because it gave him power second only to the king. Here, too, in this exalted position, he became widely known for his honesty, his thoroughness, and his complete dedication to his work.

More was fifty-one when he became Lord Chancellor, a position he held for two and a half years. He had already become a personal and intimate friend of the king; he had every thing to live for. Long before this, however, he had already become the personal and intimate friend of God; he had everything to die for.

### *The Martyr*

The sequence of events so disastrous to the Church in England had begun to unfold with Henry VIII's infatuation for Ann Boleyn and his deter-

mination to procure an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Unable to obtain this from the Pope, the English king, through Parliament, gradually maneuvered the final break with the Holy See and the proclamation of his supremacy as head of the Church of England.

About two years before this, in 1532, More had already resigned the Chancellorship. But he was not to enjoy a quiet retirement. Henry was determined that the influential More should take the oath which would acknowledge not only the right of succession of his progeny by Anne Boleyn, but also his new position as Supreme Head of the Church of England. It was this latter provision to which Thomas More could not in conscience submit. It is to his great glory that he was keenly aware of Church unity and papal supremacy. The English bishops, with the exception of Saint John Fisher, had subscribed to the oath. More was arraigned in 1534, and, upon refusing to take such an oath, was consigned to the Tower of London. There he remained for about fifteen months, during which time his family had to pay for his daily food and lodging.

On July 6, 1535, he died. He was beheaded because he up-

held the unity of the Church and the supremacy of the Pope. He was a Catholic from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. On May 19, 1935, he was raised to the altars as a saint.

### *The Good Servant*

"I die the King's good servant, but God's first." These were among the last words of the great layman, Saint Thomas More. And that idea of being a servant, one who gives a real, unfeigned service of love, could very well be about the best description of this man that could be found.

In October of 1959, a banquet was given to honor Dr. Thomas Dooley, and to gain material support for his work. He was the young man who dedicated his life and his medical abilities to the people of Laos. During that banquet, various members of the medical profession arose to pay tribute to him. One doctor, in a few words, gave expression to a very significant and basic truth, a truth which, if deeply pondered and acted upon, could transform our lives. "None of us asked to be born," he said, "but the price to be paid for the privilege of existence is service to others."

*The price to be paid for the privilege of existence is service*

*to others.* Why, properly understood, this is but another way of giving a concrete expression to the essence of Christianity!

Jesus has said practically the same thing. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. Not so is it among you. On the contrary, whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; even as the Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mtt. 20:25-28). Again, in His last discourse to the apostles, He expressed a kindred thought in even stronger words: "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13).

Such thoughts as these that welled up from the heart of the Master found a faithful echo in the Apostle to the Gentiles: "In humility let each one regard the others as his superiors, each one looking not to his own interests but to those of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

It is said of Saint Francis of Assisi, the man of the gospel, that he lived not for himself alone, but for others. It is in keeping with this holy tradition, therefore, that Saint Tho-

mas More could say that he was the King's good servant, but first and foremost God's.

And with this holy passion for service, Saint Thomas More was not afraid to become involved in temporalities. Such involvement would seem to be the object of the prayer of Jesus for His followers: "I do not pray that thou take them out of the world, but that thou keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth.... Even as thou has sent me into the world, so I also send them into the world" (Jn. 17:15-18).

Sanctity consists in an habitually perfect love for God and neighbor. For all practical purposes, the test and measure of sanctity lies in love of one's neighbor. "In this we have come to know his love, that he laid down his life for us; and we likewise ought to lay down our life for the brethren" (I Jn. 3:16). This love, which is something very definite and real, finds its concrete expression in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

"At eventide they will examine thee in love." This *Spiritual Maxim* of Saint John of the Cross expresses a reality of far-reaching consequences. It can be taken as a recapitulation in capsule form of the latter

part of chapter 25 of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, a passage which could very well supply material for frequent spiritual reading and reflection: "Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty... a stranger... naked... sick... in prison and you came to me.... Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.... (Mtt. 25:34-46).

The spiritual life should be simple because God, its Author, is Simplicity itself. And this idea would seem very simple: a true, sincere, unfeigned, unselfish service of love to God and neighbor, regardless of the cost. Yes, it is very simple, but it takes "a heap of living" to reduce it to practice, a heap of living and a powerful amount of grace. To regard others as one's superiors, to look not to one's own interests but to those of others, to lay down one's life daily for the brethren; truly this is a challenge to the complete commitment of oneself, to supernatural involvement in the interest of God and of souls! To forget oneself and really to love and serve others for God — the husband, wife, or child in the family; the re-

ligious sister in the convent and classroom; the brother in his duties of manual labor or teaching: the priest in the parish or hospital — to make the world a happier place because we have passed through it — there's the program!

There is not too much time left. Of one thing we are certain: we are going to die. It is

inevitable. In the words of Saint Thomas More, "We never ought to look to death as a thing far off, considering that although he makes no haste towards us, yet we never cease to make haste toward him" (Maynard, *op. cit.*, p. 107). Yet death will be welcomed as "sister Death" if we have really tried to be good servants to others, but to God first.

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He (Saint Thomas More) died only for that one point of the Papal Supremacy, then universally doubted and one on which it was common sense to compromise. ... I think he had very little support from within. His was not only a sceptical mind, as has been the mind of more than one who has none the less suffered death for truth held by faith and not by experience; it was also a mind which had long practice of seeing both sides of any question and thinking anything could be argued; on that particular point of the Papacy he had himself argued sincerely enough upon the wrong side. I suggest that the Martyr in his last moments had all the intellectual frailty of the intellectuals, and that at the end his scepticism was still working; but his glorious resolution stood — and that is the kernel of the affair. He had what is called "Heroic Faith."

— Hilaire Belloc, *Characters of the Reformation*

# Meditation at Calvary

*Frederick Doherty, O.F.M.*

Good Friday, the year of our Lord, 33. The holy city of Jerusalem is strangely quiet today; the warm noon air hangs heavy and close; the usual noises of the market place are stilled; only silence remains. We leave the city and walk through the Gate of Ephraim, out along the road that leads to Golgotha, that desolate, infamous hill on which criminals are put to death. As we begin our ascent, there rolls down to meet us the blood-curdling roar of a mob; it courses down the hill like an avalanche, and crashes about our ears. Startled, we stop, and look to the top of the hill, black with a swaying, seething mob. At the center of this furious maelstrom outlined against the sky like a jagged rent in a purple backdrop we see — a cross. And fastened to it with nails, a writhing, gasping, bleeding man.

Faster now, we make our way hurriedly up the narrow rugged path, the noise growing louder, louder, until at last it booms about our heads like angry surf and engulfs us. All about us surges the shouting, jeering crowd; eyes red with anger glare up at the figure on

the cross; sweaty brown fists shake to blood-chilling blasphemies: "Behold the Son of God! Come down from that cross, and we'll believe your story!"; Women's mouths twist in mocking laughter: "He could save other people all right, but he can't save himself!" And in the midst of this howling riot of man gone mad, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, bleeds to death with a broken heart.

Close by the cross stands a group of four people, small, silent, pathetic. It is His mother Mary, her sister, Mary Magdalen and the beloved apostle John. Jostled by the mob, reviled and insulted, these loyal four keep sorrowful vigil, waiting — perhaps praying — for the end.

And I? where shall I stand? In the presence of a man crucified, in the world-shaking drama that is Calvary, I cannot remain indifferent. I cannot stand off and observe objectively, like some visitor from another world. No, the gibbet of the crucified God reaches down to the very core of the earth, and splits the world into two forces forever. And, like all men, I must take a stand. I must either throw in my lot

## MEDITATION AT CALVARY

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with the tormentors of Christ, or I must join forces with His friends. Instinctively my heart responds, eagerly my soul cries out, and I willingly take my place at my Savior's torn and bleeding feet.

As I stand there beneath the cross with that pitiful loyal group, I reflect that as Jesus' persecutors are joined by a bond of hatred, so are His friends also united in a common bond, a bond of love and suffering. And suddenly there floods in upon my understanding this deep and truly tremendous truth: union with Jesus Christ is attained only through suffering! In my mind dawns the true meaning of those words which He spoke, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself", and "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." If I am to have part with Him, then I too must be lifted up from the earth; I too must be nailed to the cross. One side of the cross is occupied by His own bruised and bleeding body; the other side is empty, reserved for me.

This is not a new thought for me. Often before, in the fervor of prayer, I have voiced it. Frequently I have resolved to take up the cross and follow Christ. But has this resolution

been merely the expression of passing fervor? Do I realize what the stark reality of the cross means? Or must I admit that, like the apostles James and John, I do not know what I ask? Let me stop and consider what the carrying of the cross means to me personally, in my own life today.

Our Blessed Savior's cruel passion and death was a perfect sacrifice, the highest act of worship which could possibly be offered to God. I know that because Jesus the God-Man is both priest and victim, the offerer and the offered, this sacrifice possesses an unlimited dignity in the honor it gives to God, and an infinite value in the atonement it makes for the sins of men. By means of His death on Calvary, "Christ, being come a high priest of the good things to come, . . . entered once into the holy of holies, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11). In offering this infinitely worthy sacrifice to God, He completely fulfilled man's vocation to worship and thoroughly cancelled man's debt of sin. And once again man became a friend of God and an heir of heaven.

But although Jesus' merits are infinite in value, yet in His divine wisdom and goodness He decreed that in the application of these merits to men's souls

through His Church, individual men like myself must have a part. As He assumed human nature in which to suffer and die for us, so also He has chosen the action of human beings through which to dispense the fruits of His death. Just as I need His help for redemption and holiness, so also, marvelous as it may seem, Christ has need of me! "This is not because He is indigent and weak, but rather because He has so willed it for the greater glory of His spotless Spouse. Dying on the Cross He left to His Church the immense treasury of the Redemption, towards which she contributed nothing. But when those graces come to be distributed, not only does He share this work of sanctification with His Church, but He wills that in some way it be due to her action. This is a deep mystery, and an inexhaustible subject of meditation, that the salvation of many people depends on the prayers and voluntary penances which the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ offer for this intention..." (Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*).

This, then, is why I can find union with Christ only on the Cross; only on the Cross can I accomplish this work which He has set out for me. By a willing acceptance of suffering in my life, "I help to pay off the

debt which the afflictions of Christ leave still to be paid" (Col. 1:24). And I share in His Sacrifice, not only by partaking passively of the fruits thereof, but also by actively helping to extend them and apply them to my fellow men. In some mysterious way, through the unfathomable goodness of my Lord, I am called to take part in the salvation of men's immortal souls!

What would He have me do? How can I share in His cross? Surely I shall never suffer as He suffered. Most probably I shall never be called upon even to shed my blood. But there is a way of suffering open to me: the cross of dying to myself and living to Christ, by conforming my life to His. How many opportunities I have each day of imitating His virtues: His obedience, by cheerfully accepting the trials and troubles of my particular state in life; His charity, by seeing in every person whom I meet the image and likeness of God; His humility, by seeing myself as God sees me; His kindness, generosity, purity, and all the other virtues of which He is the model.

Often in reverie, I go back to the scene of that first Good Friday, and project myself into the events of that dire day. Had I been there, I think, I

should certainly not have fled as His apostles did. Rather, I should consider it a rare privilege to stand beneath His cross, comforting His dear mother. And yet, in the clear, cold light of reality, do I stand by His Church in the face of all adversity? Do I take advantage of the great privilege of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? Have I cultivated a true, practical devotion to Our Blessed Lady?

And what of that one cross that looms large in my life? It may be the lonely cross of deep sorrow or disappointment; it may be the gaunt cross of poverty or pain; it may be the rough cross of temptations, or even of sinful attachments to be broken. Despite its weight, do I carry my cross uncomplainingly and to the best of my ability, thereby uniting my suffering to His?

When I compare these things to the cross of Jesus Christ, they seem but trifles. But sufferings they certainly are, for in striv-

ing to be like Jesus, I must constantly chastise and discipline myself. As the author of *The Imitation* wrote, "It is no small matter, even in things the most trifling, to relinquish self" (III, 39:3). And God accepts these denials of self through, with, and in the Sacrifice of His divine Son.

Now I begin to realize the great dignity of the Cross, and its great value. God incarnate suffers and dies to redeem the souls of men sin and death. He deigns, through His Church, to canonize the sufferings of men by uniting them to His own and offering them to the Father. Men will, indeed, continue to suffer despite the Crucifixion. For suffering is the offspring of sin. But in crucifying Jesus, sin has killed itself. For suffering can now be sanctified. And sanctified suffering can conquer sin. Sin is overcome, and death holds sway no more. On Calvary's dolorous hill, the gates of heaven are unlocked to mankind with the key of the Cross.

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Suffering purifies our life, mortifies our passions, detaches us from the world and from self; it unites us anew to Christ by making us share His life of immolation; it is a sure means to continue His work of redemption and salvation. What wonder then that all fervent souls have felt drawn to the cross?

F. X. L'Hoir, S.J., *Alter Christus*



# Is "Lady Poverty" Poverty?

Linus Bertram, O.F.M. Cap.

Was the Lady Poverty wooed by Saint Francis the poverty of modern times? Did poverty have the meaning for the Poverello that it so commonly has today? Frankly, by some distortion, poverty has come to mean material destitution in our slum areas or backward countries. Dorothy Day states somewhere that she would prefer to reserve the word *poverty* for the Lady Poverty of Saint Francis. When all the trimmings that have accumulated in the past seven-hundred years have been removed, we shall find something mysteriously different in poverty. Who, then, is the Lady Poverty of Saint Francis?

I think that few persons since the time of Francis have spoken so eloquently of poverty as has Leon Bloy: "The poor you have always with you." In the whole abyss of time since that Word no man has ever been able to say what poverty is. The Saints who wedded Pov-

erty from love of her, and begot many children by her, assure us that she is infinitely lovely. Those who will have none of such a mate, die sometimes from terror or despair, at her kiss, and the multitude pass 'from the womb to the grave' without knowing what to make of such an anomalous entity. When we inquire of God He replies that it is He who is the Poor One — *Ego sum pauper*. When we inquire not of Him, He displays the glory of His riches. Creation appears as a flower of Infinite Poverty; and the supreme work of Him who is called the Almighty was to cause Himself to be crucified like a thief in the most absolute and ignominious destitution. The angels are silent, and the trembling Devils tear out their tongues rather than speak. Only the idiots of our own generation have taken upon themselves to elucidate this mystery. Meanwhile, till the deep shall swallow them up, Poverty walks tranquilly in her mask, bearing her sieve."<sup>1</sup>

The words seem to me to reveal the very depth of our Holy Founder's conception of poverty. Bloy uses the word *mystery*

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when describing poverty. This, I think, should be our attitude as well. It is not a problem that we must solve, but a mystery which we must learn more about, something in whose embracing arms we must lose ourselves. A problem is something outside ourselves, objective, like the situations we find in mathematics. Mathematical problems are outside ourselves because they have no immediate effect on our lives. But in speaking of a mystery we speak of something intimately connected with ourselves, subjective, like the mystery of our own existence. To many people God is a problem to be studied and answered, but for us He is mystery to be plunged into and be lost in, for God is so intimately united with us in our very existence. Likewise, for many people (I should be tempted to include some religious) poverty is a problem which must be solved, defined, and set into limits so one is not bothered by its kiss. But for us, poverty is a mystery which must be plunged into and relished, because, like God and our own existence, it is so intimately united with the life of man. As Bloy goes on to state, "There is no beast of the field so naked as man, and it should be a commonplace to declare that the rich are 'bad poor'."<sup>2</sup>

## *The Poverty Which is Love*

These words of Bloy would be sufficient by themselves to provide the basis for a short discussion on the nature of Lady Poverty. But the almost infinite facets of this pearl of the gospel compel me to write for an even deeper understanding. For this Lady can take one to the heights of mystical union with God, as Saint John of the Cross verifies in his life.

Our work, then, is to define poverty, or to describe it if definition be impossible, so that we can escape the trammels of our earthly existence and fly to intimate union with God. Doubtless, this is how Gratien of Paris, O.F.M. Cap., interpreted the life and words of Francis: "For him evangelical poverty was not only a wretched privation of earthly and material possessions. It personified the spirit of total renunciation of self and of all riches, material and immaterial. Humility, obedience, simplicity, chastity were in his thought the inseparable sisters of poverty, or rather different forms of poverty."<sup>3</sup>

Too often, I feel, we are under too narrow a concept of poverty to make it have any real meaning for us. The concept I am seeking is broader and highly analogous. Thus, poverty would refer primarily

Frater Linus is a theological student at the Capuchin Seminary of Saint Mary in Crown Point, Indiana. In this article he attempts to locate the virtue of poverty in the vision of Saint Francis.

to the attitude of a soul toward God as the poor, humble, man of faith — one of the "anawim" of the gospel — and only then would it refer by analogy to the renunciation of material goods and spiritual qualities. Frankly, this concept is in opposition to a traditional interpretation of poverty, but recent studies into a deeper meaning of passages in the Bible have given us this new insight.<sup>4</sup> Even more important, however, this notion of poverty would refer to a quality present in faith, a quality in hope, love, chastity, obedience, and other virtues. This hypothesis will become clearer as we proceed to explain and give examples.

It was only under this light that a statement by Father Ubaldo of Alencon, O.F.M. Cap., makes any sense. After indentifying Franciscanism with the spirit of Saint Francis, he declares that "The spirit of a saint is the personal conception which he forms for himself of a virtue or of saintliness, in the special manner in which he practices it, in the way in which he envisages Christianity from his own unique point of view, and in the combination of different virtues which he creates."<sup>5</sup> But what relation does this have to poverty? For this we must look into the life of Christ, viewing it especially

through the eyes of the great saints of the Church.

God eternally cherishes an Idea, the Word, by which He knows and performs all things. Likewise, every human genius has some central idea from which he derives all his thought and action. As we go down the line of these men, we shall see that these ideas are very similar when analyzed.

#### *Various Spiritualities*

"God is love," writes Saint John, "and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (I Jn. 4:16). John's whole life witnessed to this central idea. Saint Paul sings in his so-called "Canticle to Charity" that his whole life would be absolutely nothing without charity. And love is but the desire or the actual identity of the lover with the beloved, a total loss of the self in the beloved.

What, do you think, is central to the spirituality of Saint Benedict? Obedience? Not exactly. At first glance this is what it appears to be, but for Benedict the keystone of spirituality is humility. Obedience is merely the external expression of this interior disposition. His degrees of humility are marked by the degree of obedience. Again, humility is nothing but the recognition of our finiteness and our real

worth in the eyes of God. As Dom Marmion states, "St. Benedict has a very sure and at the same time a very wide concept of humility. He does not envisage it simply as a very special virtue apart, . . . but as a virtue expressing the whole attitude the soul ought to have in the presence of God."<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note how many references to Sacred Scripture by the Benedictines regarding humility correspond to those which Franciscans cite when speaking of poverty.

Abandonment, complete and absolute, is characteristic not only of the writings of the Jesuit, Father Caussade, but of the whole Carmelite school of spirituality. Recognition of our "nakedness" is really an amplification of both Benedictine humility and Franciscan poverty of spirit as it has been considered since the time of Francis. Whether we like the term or not, the Little Flower Saint Theresa has been called Franciscan in her attitudes. Is this because of her Franciscan spirit of poverty? No, but living her Carmelite spirit of abandonment gave her that humility and simplicity which is characteristic of Franciscanism as well. Abandonment, then, is the total self-effacement of a soul in the sight of God, and complete dependence on divine providence.

#### *The Franciscan Note*

To these concepts of Christian spirituality, Francis added a distinctive characteristic by his life of absolute renunciation of all goods of this world. Nor is his Lady Poverty something completely negative; the negative and positive aspects march in equal pace. We find the perfect analogy of this in baptism. With the pouring of the water we both die to self and become alive in Christ. And the more we become dead to ourselves during our lives, the more we become alive in Christ.

Francis had an intuition of the spiritual life which was unique. For him, all was summed up in that pearl of the gospel, poverty, and he expressed his intuition in words that take on new meaning with modern Scripture scholarship. "Our Father, who art in heaven," was a favorite prayer of the Poverello. Yes, his poverty was the spirit of the "anawim" of the gospel — the poor, humble, man of faith. "The Lord Himself revealed to me how I ought to live," is his own testimony to this intuition.

This love-humility-abandonment concept, plus the distinctive mark of absolute renunciation of all material goods, is, in my opinion, the Lady Poverty which Francis espoused. For he had the genius to see

that the spiritual life is an integral whole, and is not made up of parts which can be acquired one by one. This becomes strikingly apparent when we read Francis' own canticle on the virtues. "Hail, Queen Wisdom! The Lord save you, with your hold sister pure Simplicity. Holy Lady Poverty, the Lord save you, with your sister holy Humility! Holy Lady Charity, the Lord save you, with your sister holy Obedience! All you most holy Virtues, may the Lord save you, for from Him do you proceed and come to us. No one there is in all the world that can possess any one among you unless first he die to himself. Whoever has one of you and does not offend the rest, has all of you. And whoever offends against any one of you, has none and offends against you all."

But poverty was still a means. Love and intimate union with Christ were the ends. Saint John uses love as both means and end. But here love as a means is really a particular act of love tending toward a final union in love. If poverty really is a *poverty which is love*, then the poverty of Francis was an act of love leading to intimate union with Christ. It is equiva-

lent to the two types of vision which Saint Paul outlines in his canticle: "We see now through a mirror in an obscure manner, but then face to face" (I Cor. 13:12).

When we consider this hypothesis, we find that poverty has many ramifications. I have already hinted in the last paragraph of the possible intimate union with Christ that this virtue affords. But this touches on a mystical element of poverty, which is beyond the scope of this article.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would say that Lady Poverty was more for Francis than just material poverty, or even poverty of spirit. Lady Poverty was the unique, fundamental virtue in his spiritual life, similar to the basic spiritual concepts of other great saints. It was the attitude of the "*anawim*" of the gospel — the poor, humble, man of faith. In fact, Lady Poverty is much more than I have spoken in these few words, because Saint Francis looked upon Lady Poverty as Gabriel Marcel views human existence. Lady Poverty is a mystery, and not just a problem.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Leon Bloy, *The Woman Who Was Poor*, tr. I. J. Collins (New York, 1939), p. 217.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 218.
- 3 Alexandre Masseron and Marion Habig, O.F.M., *The Franciscans* (Chicago, 1959), p. 316.
- 4 Jean Danielou, "Evangelical Poverty," *Theology Digest*, Vol. XI, 1963, pp. 57-59.
- 5 Masseron and Habig, *loc. cit.*
- 6 Dom Thibaut, Abbot Columba Marmion, tr. Mother Mary St. Thomas (London, 1942), p. 54.

## This Cosmic Christ: The Lord Jesus

Vincent de Paul Cushing, O.F.M.

Any man who has ever felt the earth shudder under his feet when rocked by an earthquake remains forever sensitive to the slightest ground tremor. He, unlike other men, knows of a hidden, unseen power that can change his whole world. The same holds true, I suppose, for a seaman who has seen a static sea roiled into heaving cascades of water in the grip of a raging storm. When he takes to the sea once more, he does

so with an awareness that this calm sea possesses a power and might far beyond its placid appearance. The same experience is (or should be) true for the Franciscan when he looks out upon this Christic universe: he is aware of a power — a power not produced by a rupture in the earth's shell, but manifested in the removal of a stone at the tomb of Christ. He is acutely sensitive to a force in the world of far greater power and glory than a turbulent sea. He is aware of his risen Savior, the Lord Jesus, striding through the ages of man and the eons of time, and lead-

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*In this article Father Vincent, who studies theology at Catholic University, presents a resume of the theological significance of Easter.*

ing all creation to the fullness of redemption. Our victorious brother, this cosmic Christ, the person in whom all life finds its source and consummation, is truly alive and still reigning throughout the world.

#### *Redemption: Man and Universe*

The noted scholar, Fr. Stanislas Lyonnet, has shown that Saint Paul's exposition of God's redemptive plan consistently presupposed a profound unity, exemplified by the term *alliance* or *covenant*. This alliance even prior to the one with Abraham, was established by God with mankind in the person of Noah, and embraced the whole universe in the re-creation after the Flood:<sup>1</sup> "I will establish my covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every wild animal with you; all that came out of the ark, even the wild animals. I establish my covenant with you. Never again shall all flesh be destroyed by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:9-11).

Father Lyonnet points out that just as the execution of the first alliance had cosmic implications, so the eschatologi-

cal alliance will have cosmic implications.

In Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans a passage refers to the state of creation and its longing for redemption: "For the eager longing of creation was made subject to vanity — not by its own will but by reason of him who made it subject — in hope, because creation itself will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. For we know that all creation groans and travails in pain until now. And not only it, but we ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit — we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:19-23).

To appreciate this thought we must understand that for Saint Paul the *fullness* of salvation is achieved when the resurrection of the body takes place. Then, when the people of God are bodily present in the City of God, the divine plan will have been totally accomplished. The redemption of the universe is a corollary of the resurrection of man's body. The Christian is animated by the Holy Spirit, who vivifies both his soul and his body, as the Holy Spirit did for Christ's body: "But if the Spirit of him

who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also bring to life your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11). Then, in verse 23, after treating of the travail of the universe, Saint Paul mentions the hope and expectation of the Christians as the "redemption of our body". It can be seen that the redemption of the universe is a consequence of the redemption of man's body. We know that the universe itself is to be redeemed. It is not like an intruder at a reception for a select party; rather, it is called to share in the future state and expectation of the children of God. Because of the sin of man, the material universe has been subject to the punishment due to man — wars, calamities, uncontrolled disease; so should it also share in man's release from the tyranny of sin and death. Sin and death entered the stage of history in Adam's sin, but they were conquered in the passion, death, and resurrection of the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

#### *The Paschal Mystery*

Both the redemption of the universe and the resurrection of man's body are based on the Resurrection of Christ. Today many reputable scholars (e. g.,

Lyonnet, Stanley, Durrwell, and Vawter) see in the Resurrection of the Lord something more than an apologetic confirmation of Christ's divinity, or a necessary condition for the application of the fruits of the Redemption to man. Rather, they assert that the Resurrection, together with the passion and death of the Lord, effects the justification of mankind. The Paschal Mystery saves us because Jesus suffered, died, and rose from the dead. To understand how the Resurrection of Jesus has redemptive value, we must understand that Jesus' death is intimately bound together with His Resurrection. In other words, the Resurrection is the acceptance by the Father of the suffering and death of Jesus. Christ's death is redemptive because it is a great act of love and obedience designed to give *life*; it is essentially life-giving, a victory over death, and was bound to bring resurrection. Father Lyonnet has stated this concisely: "St. Paul's whole doctrine of the redemption can be summed up by saying that he united the idea of Christ's giving himself to free us from sin to that of our reunion with God (Tit. 2:14). Christ's return to God and humanity's return in Christ cannot be achieved apart from his glorification, which in-

cludes both his Resurrection and Ascension. It is because Jesus was raised from the dead that 'he has delivered us from the wrath to come' (I Thess. 1:10). 'If Christ has not risen, vain is your faith, for you are still in your sins' (I Cor. 15:17). It is through the Resurrection that Christ has become the life-giving spirit, giving life to humanity."<sup>2</sup>

What has been said so far should not surprise us as something new or different. Some think that this approach plays down the value of our beloved Lord's suffering and death. Nothing could be farther from the truth. To give a complete picture does not detract from the beauty and magnificence of each figure in the portrait. Moreover, it points out the richness in the unity of the Paschal Mystery contained in the death and Resurrection of Christ.

### *The Incarnation*

How is this appreciation of the cosmic influence of the Resurrection related to the Incarnation? If it does anything, it points out that the Incarnation, too, bore within itself a cosmic design. The humanistic emphasis of the Franciscan school has endowed creation with dignity because it sees Christ as the person who gives meaning

to all creatures: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For in him were created all things in the heavens and on the earth, things visible and invisible, whether Thrones, or Dominations, or Principalities, or Powers. All things have been created through and unto him and he is before all creatures, and in him all things hold together. Again, he is the head of his body, the Church; he, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the first place. For it has pleased God the Father that in him all fullness should dwell, and that through him he should reconcile to himself all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 2:15-20).

In this lyric passage the grandeur of the Incarnate Word shines forth, characterized as the One who gives meaning and life to the material universe. His role is that of incarnate Unity, from which the whole world comes forth as do spokes from the hub of a wheel. Again, he is the "firstborn of the dead," implying that others are to be yet born from the dead. This, His mission, is to reconcile all things to himself. The profound transformation of the

universe began with the passion, death, and Resurrection of the Lord. There is a profound unity in the one divine plan of creation and redemption.

### *A Single Plan*

We must not force a wedge between the victory of Christ in redemption and the purpose of creation. Christ the Redeemer enables the created universe to achieve its purpose, and its purpose is to partake in the saving acts of God. The Lord Jesus is not some lonely and lovely figure once present in the world but no longer of value, like a brilliant comet streaking across a far, faint horizon. He is the Lord of History, the Beginning and the End, Christ yesterday, today, and forever! In Him all things have their beginning, their existence, and their redemption; in Him all creation is redeemed.

The final age of the world has been upon us since the death and Resurrection of Christ. This new creation began with the Paschal Mystery and will achieve its fullness in the Second Coming. The final order of things exists in Christ fully, but is still incomplete in the rest of the material universe. We may say that the end of the world will come in two stages; the present age is the first stage, during which men

are allowed to share in the new creation and transformation of the material universe. When the Lord of History returns, the splendor of His glory will signal the ultimate stage. Then all that was hidden will be illuminated, the tag-ends of history will fuse together in marvelous coherence, the darkness of an unintelligible world will be suffused with the Light of the World, and Jesus the Savior will reign.

### *The Seraphic Viewpoint*

The task that confronts us as Franciscans can be stated as a paradox: our lives must be wholly worldly, yet wholly devoted to God. As sons and daughters of Saint Francis, we have the challenge "to restore all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on the earth" (Eph. 1:10). Everything is to be reborn. This is the basis for the Christian humanism which is so emphatically stressed by Seraphic theology. Everything that is (sin "is not"), is sacred. If men have wrenched creation from its true holiness, then Christian man is to consecrate it once again, just as a desecrated church is re-consecrated. Creation is sacramental, having Jesus for its beginning and its end. Because creatures are sacred, every act of human life and labor acquires

a value for eternity. Our bodies are holy because they will share in the resurrection and be glorified in heaven; our work is holy because it partakes of the transformation of this world into the world to come. In both life and labor we must keep in view the truth of the nature of creatures: they are redeemed; they are made for heaven.

Do you remember when you were a child, how the simplest thing — a cake pan, an old tire — became something of immense value to you, because you knew that it was not just a piece of trash, but a mystery, capable of myriad uses for games? Adults looked at the same thing and saw it as something fit only for the rubbish can. Who had the truer view? When a child finds an old top or a broken radio, he views it from all sides, tugs at the movable parts, explores it thoroughly. He recognizes that top or radio as something meaningful to him. The top or radio, cake pan or tire, adds to the life of the child, and he imaginatively multiplies the value of the new toy he has invented. He sees it as something special, valuable; in his own way, he redeems it. Unfortunately, as we grow older we seem to lose the ability to endow simple objects with the imaginative uses

that our child's imagination so easily and quickly bestowed on them. We shrivel up and distrust creatures, perhaps because we no longer respect them, or remember that they come from God and are destined to return to Him.

Saint Francis saw creation as a child views it: delightful, mysterious, sacred. He looked at things differently than most men do. One author has depicted the Poverello as a man who stood on his head to see the world in its true perspective: as coming down from the heavens. Our Seraphic Father was acutely aware of the Lord Jesus in the world. "The Great King of Creation" was, for Francis, not a metaphor but a title applicable to the Lord Jesus in the truest sense. All creation appeared to him as sacred, something to be venerated, to be handled with reverence, as one would do with any holy thing. In all this, he was aware that there was to be a new heaven and a new earth; but he also knew that they would be made up of the goodness of the old heaven and the old earth. When Saint Francis looked at a mountain, it came alive to him, filled with the divine grandeur and animated with desire for God. Water was precious and fire was strong, not because Francis was a medieval

conservationist, but for a higher reason: these things were Christic — coming from Christ and destined to be joined again with Christ after His Second Coming.  
*As kingfishers catch fire,  
 dragonflies draw flame;  
 As tumbled over rim in  
 roundy wells  
 Stones ring; like each tucked  
 string tells, each hung bell's  
 Bow swung finds tongue to  
 fling out broad its name;  
 Each mortal thing does one  
 thing and the same:  
 Deals out that being indoors  
 each one dwells;*

*Selves — goes itself; myself  
 it speaks and spells,  
 Crying What I do is me;  
 for that I came.*  
*I say more: the just man  
 justices;  
 Keeps grace: that keeps all  
 his goings graces;  
 Acts in God's eye what in  
 God's eye he is—  
 Christ — for Christ plays in  
 ten thousand places,  
 Lovely in limbs, and lovely  
 in eyes not his  
 To the Father through the  
 features of men's faces.  
 (G. M. Hopkins)*

Footnotes

- 1 Stanislas Lyonnet, S. J., "The Redemption of the Universe," in *The Church: Readings in Theology* (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1963), 136-156.
- 2 Idem, "St. Paul and Mystical Redemption," in *Theology Digest* 8 (1960), 87.

# The Single Silken Strand

Augustine McDevitt, O.F.M.

Classical writers on the spiritual life warn us that a soul which is free from serious sin may yet be prevented from surrendering itself entirely to God because it is attached to some small creatural thing. Restrained by such attachment, the soul is like a captive bird: though capable of flying, it cannot soar whither it will; it is tethered to earth by a single silken strand. Let the slender thread be broken, and the soul goes winging on its way to God.

We may state this truth in another way: an act which is in itself insignificant can be truly critical in our quest for union with our Heavenly Father. Many a soul, intending to free itself from a single attachment, has discovered joyously that this victory, so small in itself, has produced effects for which the soul had not dared to hope. The severance from a particular tie has resulted in a much broader liberation. Other attachments, thought to have been chains, are now seen to have been actually only the same single strand making itself felt in other areas. Having won an apparently small vic-

tory, the soul has in reality successfully traversed a genuine crisis in its journey to its goal.

The phenomenon which we are describing does not always take place. One may successfully detach oneself from a particular creatural thing without changing one's entire life. Whether or not the single act produces a universal effect will depend on how fundamental the single attachment was in one's personality. If a log jam is to be broken, it is the key log which must be moved.

From what we know of the young Francis Bernardone, he was not a wicked sinner. Yet, like all men, he had his crucial creatural attachment. In his case the single silken strand was a fastidiousness of spirit, a delicacy of taste, which caused him to savor unduly what are called the nice things of life.

Francis was wise enough to recognize shortly after his conversion the critical nature of his fault. And that, perhaps, is why he surrendered completely to God only on that day when he kissed a leper for the love of Christ.

# The Mother's Joy: A Sermon For Easter

Saint Lawrence of Brindisi

## Introduction

Saint Lawrence of Brindisi was born in 1559, and died in 1619. His life as a Capuchin-Franciscan priest was marked by sanctity, wisdom, and scholarliness. Among his many duties and positions of responsibility in the Church and order were assignments as religious superior, teacher, preacher, and official diplomat for the Holy See to the kings of Spain, Germany, and Bavaria. Most spectacular of all, perhaps, was his office as spiritual delegate in the battle against the Turks, in which he led the troops personally, armed only with his crucifix.

The friar's sanctity prompted Pope Pius VI to place his name among the Church's blessed; some ninety-eight years later, Pope Leo XIII elevated him to sainthood. His scholarliness and wisdom in explaining the divine truths, especially his writings

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*This sermon, unique in that it concerns the joys of Our Lady at the Resurrection of her divine Son, was preached by Saint Lawrence on the Vigil of Easter. The introduction and translation were done by Frater Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., of Glencliffe, N. Y.*

on the Blessed Mother, incited Pope John XXIII to list him among the official Doctors of the Church, bestowing on Saint Lawrence the title of "Apostolic Doctor."

The sermon presented here is taken from a collection which deals with the vision described by Saint John in chapter 12 of the Apocalypse. It was delivered on Holy Saturday as the concluding sermon of a Marian-Lenten series. It seems to us that the sermon is a classic example of the use of Sacred Scripture in the apostolate of preaching; it also affords a deep insight into the heart and mind of our Blessed Mother as she participated in the great mystery of the Resurrection.

— R. A., O.F.M. Cap

## THE MOTHER'S JOY

Since, dear brethren, we have recently considered the most bitter and severe sufferings of the Virgin Mother because of the passion and death of her Son, it is only right that we now turn our attention to her joys because of her Son's resurrection from the dead. She hoped for light after the darkness; she hoped for a pleasing

spring after the horrible winter had passed; she must have kept in her heart the words of the Psalmist, "Sorrow is but a guest of the night and joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 29:6), or "amid all the throning cares that fill my heart, my soul finds comfort in thy consolation" (Ps. 93:19). "Insofar as the sufferings of Christ abound in us," wrote St. Paul "so will our consolations abound through Christ" (II Cor. 1:5).

In the Old Testament the Patriarch Jacob believed that his best-loved son Joseph was dead, and it was only after a long time that he learned that his son was not only living, but was also ruling gloriously in Egypt. And just as Joseph was living in great glory, so Christ arose with great glory, for He said, "All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Mtt. 28:18). And just as Jacob rejoiced at the news of his favorite son, who could ever try to imagine what happiness and bliss the Virgin enjoyed at the glorious and immortal Resurrection of her Son, when He appeared to her in that same glory which He had shown to His chosen disciples?

In our own lives, we experience both sorrow and joy, fear and hope, love and hatred, just as if they had been balanc-

ed exactly on a scale. A shepherd rejoiced when he retrieved a sheep which had been lost; a woman who had lost a drachma was greatly relieved and thankful when she found it; and a forbearing father showed an amazing happiness when his wasteful son returned home safe. "We must rejoice and exult," he said, "because he was dead, yet he has returned to life; he was lost and has been found" (Lk. 15:22-32). What then did the Virgin feel? What kind of rejoicing was hers? What happiness did she experience because of Christ's Resurrection? If the disciples rejoiced at the sight of the Lord, how much more did the mother rejoice at the sight of her most cherished Son? If she had been so happy at His conception, when she conceived a mortal person subject to many pains, as to say, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Lk. 1:45), how much happier was she when He received immortality and blessedness?

Surely, she had the right to cry out with Anna, the mother of Samuel, "My heart thrills with joy in the Lord, and I lift up my head in my God. My mouth is bold against my enemies because I am happy in my salvation!" (I Kg. 2:1). O immortal God, how great and how

wonderful is the reason for this joy! "This is the day which the Lord has made," sings the chorus of saints, "let us rejoice and be happy during it" (Ps. 117:15). "Now the homes of the just echo with glad cries of victory" (Ps. 117:15). Yet, what was the cry of happiness and victory in the heart of the most holy mother? If the Jews saw a new light dawning, bringing rays of joy, honor, and a favorable sign to Mardochoi and Esther after the execution of the wicked Aman, a cruel and prominent enemy of the Jews, imagine what light the Virgin must have seen on this day in the great glory and exaltation of her Son, when, after He had conquered and triumphed over hell, overcome death, and crushing Satan in battle, He appeared to her clothed with the sun and wearing a crown of stars.

Mary, the sister of Moses, along with so many other prophets, rejoiced in the Lord; when this woman saw the salvation of her own people guaranteed and the destruction of the Egyptians achieved while crossing the Red Sea, she picked up a tambourine, led a group of the Israelite women, and sang, "Let us sing to the Lord, because He is so great and so glorious; He has thrown both horse and rider into the

sea. The Lord is my strength and my glory; He is my Savior!" (Ex. 15:20-21). What would Mary have done today with all the saintly women and the apostles? Most likely she would have sung again, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Lk. 1:46).

Mary rejoiced in the conception of Christ, she thrilled with joy at His birth, and when she heard "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will" (Lk. 2:13-14), the hymn echoed throughout the countryside by a chorus of angels. Mary was enraptured when the Magi came in adoration, and when she found Jesus in the temple; and she was even more joyous when she heard of and saw the great number and variety of miracles which He was working. Her joy grew more profound as she saw Him ascend into heaven, His seat of glory, accompanied by the angels. But on this day, she was filled with a happiness greater than all of these, greater than can ever be told. Just as the man who found the great treasure in his field, in an unimaginable manner Mary found an infinite glorious treasure in the Resurrection of her Son, Jesus Christ.

In the vision of Saint John, which he describes for us in the Apocalypse, we read that "A



woman brought forth a son, the son who is to shepherd the nations like sheep with a crook of iron; and this child of hers was caught up to God, right up to His throne" (Apoc. 12:5). In this we certainly can find reasons for joy; yet, we can also find reason for great sadness. But Christ once said, "A woman in childbirth feels distress because now her time has come; but when she has borne her child, she does not remember the distress any longer, so glad is she that a man has been born into the world" (Jn. 16:21). But what sort of man was born to Mary in the Resurrection? Saint John said, "A son is born, a male child." And when a son is born in the houses of kings, especially if he is the first-born son who will some day inherit the kingdom and have power over it, there is always rejoicing, not only in the house of the king, but throughout the entire city, and even throughout the entire kingdom. "She bore a child," he said, "a son"; but "he will shepherd the nations like sheep." But which king has this child as his first-born son, this prince and heir to his kingdom? "This child of hers was caught up to God, right up to His throne" (Apoc. 12:5). "We have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son of God" (Jn. 1:14).

"All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mtt. 28:18). What an infinite cause of joy and happiness!

Happiness stems from a desired good which is at hand; the greater the good, the greater the happiness for the person who receives it. If a man is created a bishop or archbishop while his parents are still living, the joy which his dignity will bring them is great. If this same man becomes a cardinal, this joy will grow even more. And should he become the supreme pontiff, certainly the greatest of all joys: his parents will be overwhelmed with happiness and jubilation. Today, Christ risen from the dead has been created by God the Supreme Pontiff and Bishop of the whole Church, both militant and triumphant. What happiness, therefore, this beloved mother must have experienced. Even if Christ had returned to a mortal life again, as Lazarus and others whom, as we read, were called back from death, in this resurrection alone she had reason to experience an unbounded joy. But Christ returned to a life which was, which is, immortal and most blessed; He returned to a life filled with the infinite glory of the divinity, and the great joy which He gave to His mother is incredible and inexpressible.

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