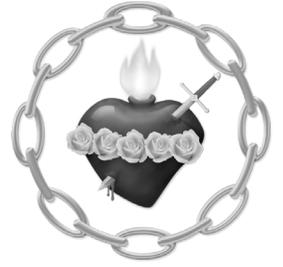


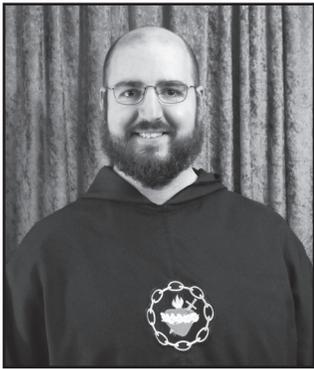
MANCIPIA

THE REPORT OF THE CRUSADE OF SAINT BENEDICT CENTER

March/April 2018



St. Joseph by Alonso Miguel de Tovar



Br. André Marie,
M.I.C.M., Prior

PRIOR'S COLUMN THE CATHOLIC QUEST

Certain common tropes appear in much of the world's literature and drama, old and new. This is so much the case that the same theme of forbidden love due to family rivalry meets us in Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe* (ca. 8 AD), Shakespeare's

Romeo and Juliet (1597), and Bernstein, Sondheim, and Laurents' *Westside Story* (1957), the latter of which I have recently learned is soon to be remade on film by Steven Spielberg. This is not to be wondered at; authors base their works on the human drama of real life, which itself has many recurring themes since "nothing under the sun is new" (Eccles. 1:10).

Holy Scripture itself has certain plot themes that are found in the world's great literature, including its religious literature. This does not bring Holy Scripture down to the level of false religion or even good merely human literary achievement; it simply puts all these things in the same universe God made, where certain experiences are recurring.

The betrayal of a close friend or relative, the epic journey (or pilgrimage), the young man coming of age amid great trials, the mentor guiding said young man, man struggling against nature, the love triangle, redemption through suffering, sins of parents being visited on children, and many others provide the reader with engaging elements of a plot-line that can frequently make a work of fiction into a good morality tale or even a channel of grace.

One theme of classical literature that was immensely popular in the ages of Christendom was that of the quest.

The *Cambridge Dictionary* tells us that a quest is "a long search for something that is difficult to find, or an attempt to achieve something difficult." It seems to me that the second part of that definition gives us a derived sense of quest, based on the fundamental notion of a literal search entailing a journey.

Wikipedia tells us that:

An early quest story tells the tale of Gilgamesh, who seeks a secret to eternal life after the death of Enkidu, including the search for an emerald.

Another ancient quest tale, Homer's *Odyssey*, tells of Odysseus, whom the gods have cursed to wander and suffer for many years before Athena persuades the Olympians to allow him to return home. Recovering the Golden Fleece is the object of the travels of Jason and the Argonauts in the *Argonautica*. Psyche, having lost Cupid, hunted through the world for him, and was set tasks by Venus, including a descent into the underworld.

That theme of descent into the underworld on a quest is found elsewhere in classical mythology. Hercules did it in the last of his twelve labors, rescuing Theseus, whose own quest in Hades was less than successful. As a lover of music, I would be remiss if I did not mention Orpheus going thither, lyre in hand, to rescue his love, Eurydice. Tragically, his quest ended in failure for the couple, but was a smashing success as poetry for Ovid and Virgil, and as opera for (Rev. Father) Claudio Monteverdi, whose *l'Orfeo* was the first operatic masterwork of history.

The ultimate descent into Hades is the Harrowing of Hell by Our Lord, when the Man-God "preached to those spirits that were in prison" (1 Pet. 3:19) and liberated them before his triumph on Ascension Thursday. No mythology ever claimed for its hero what we know by faith Jesus accomplished there.



Much of fantasy lore involves the quest. Fans of J.R.R. Tolkien would immediately think of Bilbo's journey with the Dwarves far from the Shire in *The Hobbit* as a quest — "to find our long forgotten gold." Similarly, the three books that tell us of the adventures of Bilbo's nephew, Frodo, involve a

quest, this time not to find something, but to destroy it in the only place it can be unmade, the Cracks of Doom.

But by far the most popular quest lore, and that which was most well known in the ages of faith, are the Arthurian legends, wherein we read of knights on a sacred quest for the Holy Grail.

That these thoughts are at all on my mind is owing my recently reading *A Catholic Quest* for the Holy Grail by my good friend Charles Coulombe. I have no intention of reviewing the book here — except to say that it is a very good book which you should buy and read, which isn't a very good or thorough review — but I would like, instead, to consider this theme of the sacred quest in the inspired pages of the Bible, for the Holy Ghost seems to like a good quest as much as those medieval greats, Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbac, and Sir Thomas Malory, who wrote so wonderfully of King Arthur and his knights.

Abraham was a man on a quest. God brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees to give him the land of Chanaan, that land of promise. But the trip was long. It was begun by Abraham's father, Thare, who brought the family as far as Haran (in present-day Turkey), and the journey was not resumed until Abraham was seventy-five. But Abraham himself did not take possession of the land, nor did Isaac or Jacob. As was told Abraham ahead of time, his seed did not take possession of the land at all until more than four hundred years later, after the Exodus. Even then, it was not till the time of King David, about a thousand years after Abraham, that the conquest of the Promised Land was complete. So the epic quest was not only multi-generational, but even millennial.

Abraham himself was given the unique vocation, unlike Noah, of keeping the faith alive as he lived and journeyed among faithless and corrupt men, God himself testing his faith and obedience by making him wait till the ripe old age of one hundred for the arrival of his promised son, Isaac. Quite a quest.

A charming short story of quest in the Old Testament is the one-chapter tale of Abraham's servant being sent by his aging master into Mesopotamia to look for a wife for Isaac. Happily, that servant comes back with the lovely Rebecca, and Isaac, "loved her so much, that it moderated the sorrow which was occasioned by his mother's death." Mission accomplished.

To the best of my knowledge, the most perfect specimen of the pure quest genre that was inspired by the Holy Ghost is to be found in the Deuterocanonical book of Tobias. In it, the younger Tobias is sent by his father (of the same name) to go



from Nineveh, where they are in captivity, to far distant Media in order to collect a debt he is owed by one Gabelus. This is after the elder Tobias has lost his sight, owing to the bizarre occurrence of hot dung from a swallow's nest falling on his eyes as he lay sleeping. Just as the young man is leaving on his journey, a mysterious and handsome kinsman they have never met presents himself as a traveling companion. He is no man, but, as Tobias finds out only at the end, he is the Archangel Raphael, who acts as guide, mentor, protector, and healer for his young charge.

All ends well and most happily, but this is after young Tobias comes of age by suffering the adversities of the quest, including a fish that wants him for dinner and, worse, a demon, Asmodeus by name, that wants to murder him and take his soul by impurity. If you have never read the book of Tobias please do so. It is an engaging story and a wonderful meditation on marriage and the

family, among other subjects.

As for the New Testament, the first men we meet on a quest are those mysterious orientals, the Magi, who seek the King of the Jews after seeing His star rise in the East and journeying far to adore Him (Matt. 2:2). The star, no doubt, they recognized as the one that would "rise out of Jacob," according to the prophesy of their fellow oriental, Baal (Num. 24:17).

Immediately after the visit of the Magi, Saint Joseph is sent a-questing by an angel. The Flight into Egypt would have taken the Holy Family about a week to complete, over some truly "bad road." The Greek biographer, Plutarch, tells us that the same crossing was made by the Roman officers of Gabinus in 55 B.C., who feared the trip more than the war that awaited them in Egypt. This was a real desert, complete with shifting sands and brutal heat. The only food and water Mary and Joseph would have had was what they could carry. Once in Egypt, they were out of danger from Herod, but had to endure several months in the pagan land that was the very symbol of evil in the Old Testament.

Our Lord having begun his public ministry, the Twelve are sent on a quest to preach and heal in Matthew ten (and Luke nine). The Seventy-two are sent on a similar quest in Luke ten. After the Resurrection and just before the Ascension,

Jesus gives the great mandate to make disciples of all nations, concluding with the words, “Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). Quite a quest, that.

Jesus Himself was sent by His Father on what Catholic theology calls a “mission,” for the Father can send the Son just as the Father and Son can send the Holy Ghost. We might call that mission of the Man-God a quest, the greatest of all quests — for the glory of the Trinity and the salvation of man.

But after Jesus, who was the greatest “quester”? Saint Paul was, I believe, because he was the greatest missionary ever. His noble apostolic quest put him:

in many more labours, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea.

In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without: my daily instance, the solitude for all the churches. (II Cor. 11:23-28)

The book of Acts and several passages of his Epistles relate his labors.

Now the true quest is interior in nature and not merely exterior. Virtue and vice, sanctity and temptation: these are internal realities. And he who finds the Grail is judged worthy

to do so only by these measures, having been first tested in the “Chapel Perilous,” where his virtues and vices are made known to him. So, too, the great saints who quested for souls did so successfully only in proportion as they lived by “the soul of the apostolate.” Ironically, the journey outward is also a journey inward, seeking for and finding God, who is always in us, ever drawing nearer as we seek, find, and love Him.

Saint Paul was an Apostle in the strict sense of the word, and therefore a priest and bishop. By contrast, the knights for whom the Arthurian legends were written were laymen, so their tales are not those of a man whose quest is to participate in functions proper to the Church hierarchy. Yet the quest for the Holy Grail gave these laymen the clear idea and image of themselves as fulfilling sacred duties of religion. As Charles Coulombe quotes another author saying, it is not knighthood *in the service* of religion that is being described here, but knighthood as the service of religion.

And this is where we modern men may take our cue. The married man can engage in the sacred quest just as the cleric. While performing clerical functions (e.g., of a “Eucharist minister,” etc.) are *not* proper to his state, there is much of a strictly sacred character that is — including the saving of his soul and the souls of his wife and children. He needs the priest, for without priestly ministrations of a sacramental and liturgical character, his quest will not be attained. But the priest needs him, too, for if the family is ruined, all is ruined. Clerical fathers and familial fathers need to work together on the sacred quest to restore the family. And as for sanctifying the temporal sphere, which is to say making civil society “sacral,” that is principally and directly the task of the layman, not the cleric, whose indirect work is nonetheless essential.

It is time we stop laicizing the clergy and clericalizing the laity. Men: grab your beads, choose your quest, and get moving. ■

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Ad Rem

Once every two weeks (about), Br. André Marie, M.I.C.M. sends out an email called *Ad Rem*. (This Latin phrase means, roughly, “to the point.”) The main contents of those mailings are published on our site, catholicism.org, but some other messages and offers come in the email version that are not on the site.

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Sister Marie Thérèse, M.I.C.M.

CONVENT CORNER

HOW TO WASTE SUFFERING

Dear Reader,
You have perhaps heard of the value of suffering. And, how to “cash it in” by offering it up. In fact, you have probably heard so much about the value of suffering, that

you are quite deaf and dull of mind to the subject. Therefore, I am going to address, instead, the neglected topic of how to waste suffering. Yes, it is an art that could be perfected...

Let's commence at the very beginning of your day. Start by not meditating. By not meditating you are unlikely to think of praying and offering sufferings when they come. This is quite effective and doesn't require any effort on your part. Yes, meditation and the consequent recollection it produces make it more difficult to waste suffering when it comes later in the day — so avoid it, Dear Reader. However, if you do happen to think of praying when agitated by suffering, just don't. If you feel you must pray, only do so in a distracted way, not whole-heartedly. Make sure you do not focus your attention on Our Blessed Mother during those precious moments! If you do, She will definitely work on your heart moving you to embrace suffering!

In your mind and heart... Instead of typical meditations on spiritual subjects, encourage what I will call agitation-accumulation-meditations. These can be made at any hour of the day (or night if you can't sleep). Yes, as soon as you realize that suffering has caused you to be agitated, anxious, irritated or otherwise not at peace, deliberately feed that line of thought and emotion. Why? Because if you can successfully maintain an atmosphere of agitation in your mind and heart, you will find it second nature to waste suffering in ingenious ways. You will know if you are really successful in your meditation if this train of thought leads you to be distracted from your duties; conversant during prayer time (with someone other than the One you are supposed to be addressing); and, in general, short, intense and irritated with those around you. If you are persevering in this exercise, you will eventually reach the point of depression, and you can then be sure you have been successful in wasting suffering!

In your conversations with others... Along similar lines you will find emoting-sessions more than just helpful in your quest to waste suffering. How to proceed? If there are any opportunities to have conversations, be sure to bring up whatever is causing you pain (displeasure is, of course, a form of pain). Ideally, this would be done in such a way that the person you are addressing mirrors your emotional state and even tone of voice, gestures, language and facial expressions. This is actually one of the great secrets to wasting suffering! Yes, almost everyone is under the false impression that emoting on someone else is cathartic, when it is actually quite

the opposite. Besides, emoting on someone else will prove a great means to help your neighbor join you in losing his peace and consequently wasting his own suffering. Hence, I would go so far as to call this kind of conversation the very apostolic life in the quest to waste suffering. Very effective! Unfortunately, Dear Reader, the term “gossip” has introduced the unpleasant guilt factor that you will probably encounter as you pursue these emoting sessions. Speaking to someone (like a priest or a good Catholic psychologist) who would actually encourage you to embrace the suffering you are wrestling with, is not the same! In fact, make sure you don't speak to someone of that description or you will probably fail in your attempts at wasting suffering.

Oh, I almost neglected to tell you one of the greatest helps to wasting suffering. Yes, Dear Reader, better than an emoting session with like-emotioned companions, is the more entrancing and easily personalized internet. The suffering that comes from not wanting to do what is truly our duty (sometimes known as “acedia”) can be effectively deluged in a personalized ocean of distraction. Yes, “have it your way,” Dear Reader! Amazon, Ebay, Facebook, email, online news, Youtube, curious research, Twitter, etc. etc. Hours of distraction can be accomplished with a minimum of effort with the aid of electronic devices (even if they can't get online).

Nota bene: the amazing quality of this type of suffering (the kind that causes us to evade our duties), is that it can survive many deluges of distraction and actually get stronger. Yes, you will find that your suffering comes back with a vengeance when you finally turn your attention from your electronic device. Why? Another guilt trip of suffering has been added! But remember, Dear Reader, the downpour of suffering that follows will merely be a challenge to your skill at wasting it. I would guess that you already have experience with this?

Perhaps you are noticing a pattern here, Dear Reader. Ah! And this is indeed the greatest secret in wasting suffering! The more suffering we waste, the more suffering there will be for us to waste!

Good Friday approaches, Dear Reader. Because of the suffering we have successfully wasted over many years, we have more suffering coming upon us. Our dear Jesus does all He can to save us. Yes, He suffers for us in every fibre of His Humanity...down to the last drop of His Precious Blood...down to His last breath.... However, in paying the price of our Salvation, He needs our help. Yes, there is a part that only we can do. “We must make up for what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ” (Col. 1:24). So, now, if we would be saved, we need to contribute our part...our sufferings borne with patience, diligence and love.

Maybe that could be your next meditation, Dear Reader? ▪

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Mr. Brian Kelly

KELLY FORUM THE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

“For I say to you: Amongst those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. But he that is the lesser in the kingdom of God, is greater than

he (Luke 7:28).”

“Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is the lesser in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Matthew 11:11)

The passages, although a little different, refer to the same incident and the meaning is basically the same, that passage from Luke providing a key word, namely “prophet.” Some more modern commentators make note of that word in stressing that Saint Joseph was greater than John the Baptist. Saint Joseph, they note, was not a prophet.

My concern, however, is with the verse, *he that is the lesser in the kingdom of God, is greater than he.*

I need help here. I do not understand it. Therefore, I go to my trusty exegete, Cornelius a Lapide.

The answer he provides, from the Fathers, is much simpler than I thought. I do not even need to quote any Father directly.

A Lapide says that the key is in the words “kingdom of heaven” or “kingdom of God.” John the Baptist was still a

wayfarer when Jesus said these prophetic words. John would be “greater” in glory, a Lapide explains, than he was as a mortal pilgrim. Not that the Baptist would be a “lesser” in the kingdom of heaven; but he would be a “greater,” greater than what he himself was on earth. So, too, even the least of the blessed in heaven, will be (after Christ’s ascension) greater than Saint John was prior to the Savior’s ascension. Prior, that is, not after.



St. John the Baptist

Our Lord was giving a lesson on the unimaginable joy of beatitude that would come from His grace. Indeed, as Saint Paul says in quoting Isaiah: “That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Cor. 2:9) Those who consider themselves “the least” in this life will be exalted in the next.

See the humility of John: “I am not worthy to loose the strap of his sandals.” Again, “He must increase and I must decrease.” Even the seasons express it: For the days get shorter after the birthday of John the Baptist (June 24) and the days get longer after Christmas. And in death too. John was beheaded, his severed head dropped to the earth of the prison floor;

Christ was lifted up on the Cross drawing all things to Himself.

Let us, therefore, obey Our Lord and strive to become like little children. Placing a child before His Apostles, Jesus said: “For he that is the lesser among you all, he is the greater” (Luke 9:48). ■

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Br. John Marie Vianney,
M.I.C.M., Tert., Prefect

PREFECT'S COLUMN

THE POVERTY OF OUR LADY

In the previous issues of the column, I have tried to cover the virtues of Our Blessed Mother, e.g., humility, faith, hope, charity, purity, chastity, etc. Surely no one, not even her most devoted clients, could cover them all. Only God, whose grace so highly elevated her, knows them all.

Poverty, in the way the word is most often used, is “the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support; condition of being poor.” Today it is thought to be a terrible thing to be poor. Mary has the fitting attitude toward poverty and riches, as she is the perfect model for all the virtues; that being so, is it not good for us to imitate this virtue?

Father Spitzer, in his classic, *How to Imitate the Virtues of Our Lady*, sets out two important ideas for our consideration: *Poor in Fact* and *Poor in Spirit*.

“Traditional tales about the ancestry of Mary assure us that her parents were quite well-to-do. Her own life shows no traces of wealth.” Recall, writes Father Spitzer, when the Holy Family reached Bethlehem, on Christmas eve, they found no shelter “or lodging either in the inn or in the homes of the city; had they the financial persuasion to back their plea, something else besides a stable would have been their residence.” And what was it they offered at the temple at the Presentation, but the gift of the poor, two doves. The rich gave a lamb. We know the costly gifts that the Magi, affluent Eastern potentates, brought to the young King: gold, frankincense and myrrh. One would think those gifts would have brought them some alleviation of their materially poor existence, however, there is no evidence of bettered circumstances in the Holy Family. Father writes, “Undoubtedly these gifts were shared with the poor, and thus the flight into Egypt and the exile there bore the stamp of hardship and poverty.”

“On returning to Nazareth, they “found its people hostile or indifferent to the God in their midst.” Saint Joseph continued his carpenter’s trade until he died, with Our Lord at his bedside. Later, Jesus described the poverty of His public life to His disciples in these words: “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Then, our author notes, “When Christ died, not Mary but others bought spices and brought them to the grave. Her poverty thus endured during her entire lifetime.”

Where did this love of poverty come from? We return to Father Spitzer:

“Poor in Spirit. The actual poverty of Our Lady was inspired by her great love for God. With an insatiable longing, her heart yearned for God alone. She often repeated the words of the Psalmist: ‘My soul longs for the living God.’ In her own song of praise, the Magnificat, she sang: ‘The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich, he hath sent empty away.’ **Such love and longing for God must result in complete spiritual detachment and separation from created things.** (emphasis added) Not blinded by the effects of original sin, Mary saw all things in their proper perspective.”

Here we must pause to savor those two sentences. Firstly, her love of God reached such a height that she could lovingly separate herself from earthly needs; but this was to be since she had none of the effects of original sin, such as inclinations to material amenities, as the rest of us do.

Father goes on, “She realized the futility of amassing wealth if this would result in the eternal loss of God and of one’s soul. She knew that, if she wished to fly to God, she must not be held back by an improper attachment to material values.”

What is it, then, that we should seek, if not worldly wealth? We should seek that which we should most hunger for — the Bread of Life, the Holy Eucharist, for it is here that we find the “living God.”

Virtues often do not stand alone, e.g., faith, hope and charity. Hope works wonders, as it reveals the vanity of earthly things, it detaches us from them and makes us love poverty. Did anyone besides Jesus love poverty more than Mary did? In *Mary Our Mother, Our Model, Our Queen*, Venerable Emmanuel-Maurice d’Alzon adds that she “had only a stable to bring forth the Saviour of the world. She lived in a carpenter’s workshop, and when Jesus died, Saint John had to take her into his home... Poverty is the counterpart of hope... just as the virtue of poverty is related to the virtue of hope, the virtue of obedience is related to the virtue of charity. Let us therefore proclaim with great love: ‘I am the servant of the Lord.’ Mary was born poor and she died poor. If John had not offered her shelter after Jesus’ death she would have been homeless.”

Those who hope foolishly seek the riches of the earth; those who hope wisely become detached from earthly possessions. Let us hope and “scorn the things of earth and turn our desires toward heaven,” says Father d’Alzon. All that Our Lady did was sacrificed to the greatest of loves, God alone. He adds, “she participated in the birth of God born in the greatest humility and deepest poverty.”

Ven. d’Alzon explains a beautiful thought for us to meditate on, “Mary Enriched by the Poverty of Jesus... he made himself poor though he was rich, so that you might become

rich... (2 Cor. 8:9) Mary pondered this mystery: A God who would have so many magnificent palaces over the world and have palaces built for his friends the saints and for his friends the poor. Mary saw all that and reflected: **it must be indeed true that poverty is the greatest of riches, since it is through poverty that my son is establishing his kingdom.** Let us follow in Mary's footsteps, let us imitate her, let us be poor, and we shall possess all riches." (emphasis added)

Finally, let us consider that the birth of the King of kings was not first revealed to the great of this earth; no, it was first announced to the poor shepherds. Venerable d'Alzon: "Their common poverty gave them the right to be the first to share the joy of the whole world... *The angel of the Lord appeared*



to them as the glory of the Lord shone around them," (Lk 2:9) And who was witness to this? Our Blessed Mother, the Queen of Poverty. Our Lord chose to live in poverty. Our Lady wished to be with Him in all things and followed Him into poverty.

Mary, teach me to be, like thee, poor in spirit! ▪

Email Brother John Marie Vianney, at toprefect@catholicism.org

*Unless otherwise noted, the quoted material in the first part of this article comes from *How to Imitate the Virtues of Our Lady*. The material in the second part comes from *Mary Our Mother, Our Model, Our Queen*.

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Father Leonard Feeney,
M.I.C.M.

FOUNDERS' COLUMN FISH ON FRIDAY — AN EXCERPT

I remember once being asked by a very ponderous Protestant Divine: “When you read Matins in your Breviary, do you believe everything that is written in the lessons of the Second Nocturne concerning the lives of the Saints?”

“Well,” I replied, “that all depends on what you mean by the word ‘believe.’ I do not BELIEVE them as part of the Christian Revelation. Nevertheless I credit them with some authority, let us say as the best record of a saint’s life available when an account of it was being prepared for recitation in the Divine Office.”

“You know,” he added, paying not the slightest attention to the explanation I had given, “the French pay compliment to a skillful liar by saying, ‘He can lie like a Second Nocturne.’”

I laughed out loud. But my reverend adversary, strange to say, did not laugh at all. He looked very serious.

Now why did I laugh, and why did he not laugh, at a joke which was entirely on me? For the simple reason that I have in common with those of my Faith, a sense of humor radically

different from that of an outsider. There are — let there be no mistake about it — Catholic quips and drolleries which no one but a Catholic can tell, and no one but a Catholic can see the point of. I hate to analyze a joke, but let me do so for once, in order to illustrate what I mean.

Every Catholic knows that our Church sometimes speaks directly in the name of God. To each phrase of God’s revelation we attach a sacredness that would not warrant our making a joke about it. If anyone (even a Frenchman) should say about a liar, “He can lie like the Apostles’ Creed,” I should not only resent the remark, I should not only think it not in the least funny, but I should promptly wither my opponent with one of the retorts I keep at hand for just such a situation.

But the lessons of the Second Nocturne do not always come to us directly from God. Many of them were written not by inspired writers, but by some holy old monks whose purposes were not historical but panegyric, who were trying to compose not chronicles but eulogies. Now there is between a good panegyrist and a good prevaricator an apparent similarity, in that both over-tell their story, the former to delight, the latter to deceive. That is why a comparison of the two is so funny. But the universal law of all humor achieved by comparison demands that underneath an apparent similarity there be a



real difference. And if one doesn't see the real difference, one doesn't see the joke.

Furthermore, every authentic Christian joke is at once humorous and pathetic. One smiles not in ridicule but in tenderness at the poor old scribe who wrote lessons for the Second Nocturne in order to commemorate a saint whom he loved, and who tried so hard to tell the truth, he told it too well. For charity is the most childlike of all the virtues, and it thinks sometimes, in its innocence, it can do service for every other virtue besides itself, even for the virtue of veracity.

... I am anxious to discover, in some fashion or other, what is the inner secret of our [Catholics'] joy, and what it is that makes us laugh by ourselves, and within ourselves, even when we are alone.

I am sure the reason lies in our knowing, through the light of Faith, paradoxes too magnificent to be contradictions. And this is the secret not only of our mirth, but of our sorrow as well. There is an empty amusement and an empty sadness that come from a mere knowledge of life's contradictions. But these are the portion of the skeptic and the stoic, who seldom laugh and seldom weep. But the Christian may look into a world of mystery in which all contradictions are reconciled, even though paradoxes remain. And the fruit of his wisdom is his gaiety and his tears; for laughter and tears are the safety valves of sanity, and by these beautiful outlets the strain within our nature is relieved.

I may illustrate this animadversion by another little story.

There is a convent not far from where I live, to which I have gone on occasions to give a retreat. At this convent one meets a very nice old lay sister, who has charge of the priest's dining-room, and whom I may call Sister Mary.

"Sister Mary," I said to her one day, as I sat beaming over a splendid dinner which she had just brought in on a tray, "if you were going to order a nice meal for yourself, what dishes would you choose? What would you like best to eat?"

She rubbed her hands on her apron and stood for a while speculating, and then said, finally and decisively: "I think I'd love a nice thick beefsteak!" Whereupon she began to laugh, and laughed and laughed and laughed, until tears streamed from her eyes.

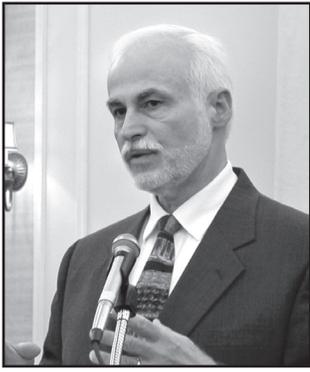
I must confess I was not prepared for such a mirthful explosion, and it puzzled me. I knew, of course, the traditional Christian custom (which nuns observe most scrupulously) of laughing whenever anything pleasant is either spoken of or

thought of. But this was sheer hysterics, and seemed unwarranted by anything either Sister Mary or I had said which was so dreadfully funny.

It was only after I returned to my room and had time to meditate on the matter, that I arrived at a solution of my perplexity. I am sure the reason for Sister Mary's hilarity, even to the point of turning herself into a fountain, was her use of the word "love" in the sentence, "I think I'd love a nice thick beefsteak."

One begins to see how funny this concept is when one remembers the love employments of Sister Mary's heart during the rest of the day. My question, I daresay, had distracted her from some holy thought. She is not often asked about the amours of her appetite. But being asked, she must admit that the same heart which loves God and His angels and archangels in her moments of contemplation, has lowlier and less ethereal preferences when she studies a bill of fare. Now it is a shatteringly laughable experience to transfer one's attachment suddenly from something sublime and eternal to something desperately temporal and comestible, to be loving at one moment a living angel and at another a dead cow. But, because a Seraph is just as real to Sister Mary as a sirloin, she saw the absurdity of their conflict in her heart's affections, and went into a paroxysm.

It is interesting to notice that in non-Catholic circles, and in Catholic circles which have been influenced by non-Catholic culture, (and many of us have adopted, more than we are willing to admit, the moods of the pagans and the manners of the heretics in whose midst we live) there is no genuine humor of this kind. An honest Christian joke, in which the very roots of one's being are shaken with laughter, has been supplanted, in this country at least, by what is known as a wise-crack. A wise-crack is a bogus form of humor in which a ridiculous sense of the sublime is combined with a sublime sense of the ridiculous. Its physical reaction is not a laugh but a snicker. Being rarely capable of more than two variations, the one uncharitable, the other unchaste, it is noticeably the most tiresome form of humor ever invented. It will eventually destroy one's power to laugh altogether, as well as raise havoc with one's nervous system. There is no reckoning how much mental harm is being done to the amusement audiences of America by reading and listening to professional wise-crackers, to whom their own fun-making is a drudgery, and who, after a short spasm of popularity, inevitably succumb to melancholia, alcoholia and other poisons. ■



Larry Koralewski

GUEST COLUMN

WHY PHILOSOPHY?: *WHY COSMOLOGY & PSYCHOLOGY?*

Cosmology is the branch of philosophy that looks at the entire material Universe — every single thing. That is quite a bold and sweeping consideration! It seems quite impossible that a study

which is only one branch of *philosophia perennis* is capable of encompassing so much. Everything? Yes, everything! As Brother Francis describes it, Cosmology “studies the order of nature (the visible universe) by prescinding from the fact of life.” It studies every sensible object “from the remotest star to the smallest drop of water.” Cosmology studies beings in change as well as permanent realities “which can be apprehended by the mind, thought about, and expressed in human language.”

As mentioned in an earlier article, Brother Francis places Cosmology as the second in his series of eight philosophy courses, following Minor Logic. More “traditional” philosophy study programs follow Minor Logic with Epistemology and Ontology. Brother saves those two more abstract courses for the end of the series. He wants the student to be firmly grounded in material reality before he soars to the heights of thought.

Being “grounded in reality” sounds fine and dandy, but what does that mean? Aren't we all grounded in reality by the simple fact that we must make our way through this very material world every day of our lives?

A person with common sense and healthy faculties looks around and perceives the world as something separate from himself. He knows that he and the tree in front of him are different beings, that the tree is an objective reality. He also knows that the tree really exists; it is not merely a figment of his imagination. As he observes the material world, he sees it is also contingent, that everything in it depends on some other being for its existence. Nothing is responsible for its own existence.

It is also obvious to the person with common sense that living beings are different from those that have no life. Even if he cannot express it in words, he observes that an invisible principle must give life to some things and that non-living things do not have it. If he is a person who thinks deeply, he concludes that the entire material universe must have been brought into existence by a being that already existed. All of this makes perfect sense...to the man with common sense anyway.

Unfortunately, in today's world, we are surrounded by a sort of conspiracy to destroy common sense — to upset its certainties and obscure the straight-forward conclusions it

provides. Even more unfortunate is the inability of the man of common sense to defend his certitudes when they are questioned, undermined or attacked outright. Common sense is “a sound practical judgment concerning everyday matters, or a basic ability to perceive, understand, and judge, that is shared by (common to) nearly all people,” according to Wikipedia. While it provides the ability for sound judgment and a reasonable understanding of the world, common sense does not provide the tools for its own defense.

This is where the study of Cosmology comes in. Following on the heels of Minor Logic, Cosmology studies the world of the man of common sense. It looks at things as they are. Using the foundation of Logic to avoid fallacies and inconsistencies, the study of Cosmology helps him to understand his world with greater clarity and to gain confidence in his notions concerning them. When these common ideas and judgments are undermined or attacked, he is not shaken. He now has the tools to defend them and, if necessary, even explain them to other people of common sense if he observes their confidence in the objectiveness of reality is being eroded by excessive subjectivism or if the general atmosphere of bad thought is forcing them off-track.

In Cosmology, we learn that every material being has a nature and acts according to that nature. We learn that the so-called “laws of science” are the result of these individual natures and not vice-versa. If material beings failed to act according to their natures, the universe would instantly become a chaos: the earth would fall away; water would become something different; planets would collide with other planets at random. All the predictability which provides the basis for the natural sciences and for our very existence would utterly collapse.

By using something as simple as a grain of sand, Brother Francis demonstrates how every sensible object has an individual nature and is part of the greater Order of Nature. And that it is composed of something sensible and something that is beyond the senses. Cosmology studies “beings in change” yet Brother shows us how the visible universe cannot be reduced to a mere process of indeterminate, unintelligible, unending change or flux. He confronts the modern notion of evolution directly and helps us to understand why it is patently absurd.

Building on our common sense, Cosmology gives us the ability to see purpose in the universe, to understand why it exists and why everything in it acts in a certain manner. By the time we have finished our study of this topic, we are confident, even prescinding from supernatural revelation, that the universe was created by an Intelligence and that it was created for a purpose intended by this Intelligence. We come to realize that discovering this Purpose is propelled by our very

natural desire to know. As Aristotle puts it at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*: “all men by nature desire to know.” When we understand that there is a Cause for all other causes, it is only natural that we want to know more about It.

Cosmology gives power to common sense, preventing its perversion by erroneous ideas. The study of Cosmology puts us in touch with the long history of great thinkers from other ages and other countries. Because it gives us confidence in what is true about the material universe, it also inspires us to seek more and higher truths. As a result of a more profound understanding of the world around us and the laws that govern it, Cosmology prepares our minds to accept the highest of all truths — God’s Divine Revelation.

Why Psychology?

When we hear the word “psychology,” most of us immediately think of the modern study of human behavior or the treatment of some problem through the use of behavior modification, psychoanalysis or counseling. More often than not, we think of abnormal conditions. Almost every modern man has his own philosophy of living beings, specifically human beings, and all his other behavior is rooted in that outlook. The study of Psychology in philosophy is different; it is the study of all rational material beings as they exist in nature. It does not study the aberrant but concentrates on what is normal. Because it is very personal and directly examines the powers of living human beings, the study of Psychology is also one of the most fascinating courses in the entire philosophy series.

Brother Francis places Psychology immediately after his course in Cosmology. As with the placement of Cosmology, he does this so the students can become more confident in their ideas about the world because they can compare them with reality before eventually moving into the very abstract study of General Metaphysics (Epistemology and Ontology). In the same manner as Cosmology, Psychology looks at the world as does the man of common sense. For example, we will clearly understand that our senses accurately perceive the real world around us; that we are different from animals and non-living beings and how we are so; and that all living beings have powers and they exist in a certain hierarchy.

Psychology teaches us about the twenty-four faculties (another word for “powers”) that are common to all sentient beings including humans and the two additional spiritual faculties of the soul that are exclusively human. We learn about one of the greatest achievements of philosophy — the definition of life and we compare it to so-called “scientific” definitions. Quickly, the superiority of the philosophic definition over those that are materialistic or mechanistic becomes quite

apparent. We also clarify the difference between the actions of living bodies versus non-living bodies and why it is impossible for any computer to “think.”

Regarding the human soul and its spiritual faculties of intellect and will, by the end of the course, we will be convinced that the human will is free. We will understand that both powers are spiritual, and we will clearly see why.

Even if we learned nothing more than the powers of living bodies and the definition of life, our understanding of the world would increase immeasurably. “But, wait. There’s more!” Much more, in fact. Among the faculties we find the passions — those very powers which cause us such a struggle as we attempt to master ourselves. We examine all nine of them from love and desire to despair and anger. Our study of Psychology becomes very personal, and we have no difficulty comparing the concepts we learn with the reality we find right inside of ourselves. We gain a greater understanding of our internal struggle when we examine concupiscence — the tendency of our fallen nature to place the passions above reason.

When we study the soul, the thing that makes matter become a living body, our understanding of non-rational life, of human life and even of angelic life increases immensely. We will also understand clearly the powers of and differences between vegetative life, animal life, and human life. We discover why angels do not have souls at all. Angels are pure spirits; and we will see the difference between “spirit” and “soul.”

Do animals think? Though, in some ways, this is one of the most challenging portions of the course, the study of Psychology provides a convincing answer. We defend the thesis that man understands but that no animal understands. We study instinct and learn how it is the highest power in animals but merely one of the lower faculties of man (whose highest powers are his intellect and will). When we complete our comparison of man to the other animals, we see, not only how he is the highest of God’s material creatures, but we also clearly comprehend that his rational powers are the lowest of all the intelligent beings. One of the goals of Psychology is to obtain a full grasp of the spirituality of man’s soul, a real understanding of the spirituality of its activities. The subtle and beautiful proof of the immortality of the human soul is nothing short of thrilling. Even though they are all dependent on the body in this life, the soul’s powers manifest a higher reality than all of the material forces that move a man from within and without.

Psychology studies the habits (virtues) which are found only in humans, and we discover why they are the basis for all civilization by learning their relationship to Art, Morality and Science. We examine human essence, powers and actions and gain a greater appreciation for man and his relation to the rest

of the visible universe. We discover man's purpose and find out why man is called the *microcosm*, a summary of the entire universe. By the time the course is completed, we will be convinced of three fundamental truths: the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul, and the freedom of the will.

Everything we learn in Psychology is built upon principles we learned in Minor Logic and Cosmology. There are no contradictions, nothing that will make us doubt how it relates to the world around us. All eight philosophy courses form a coherent, well-ordered system of thought. And Psychology,

even though it deals with us as real, fallible persons going about our daily business, is not an exception. There is no disparity between the abstract concepts and observable reality. Our sense that there is a Purpose to the universe will be greatly strengthened as we study the powers of and actions of all living beings. By the time we have finished the course, we have laid a solid foundation for the study of the next philosophy course — Ethics. ■

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Brother Paul Mary, M.I.C.M.

On the feast of the Epiphany, January 6, Brother Paul Mary, M.I.C.M., was received into the Order of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary as a novice. Already wearing the tunic during his period of postulancy, on entering the novitiate he received the capuche, which is the hood that covers the shoulders and head. With this, and the cincture, our new brother is habited as a Slave of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, awaiting only the fifteen-decade Rosary which is to be received two years hence, Deo Volente, at his first profession of vows.

“What do you ask?” the Prior asks the aspirant as he kneels before the altar.

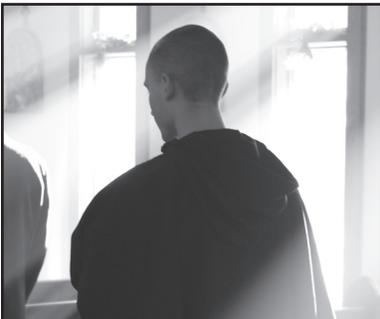
“I ask humbly for the habit of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so as to insure my eternal salvation.”

After some prayers, the Prior concludes the ceremony with this prayer:

O God of mercy, God of compassion, God from whom all good things proceed, without whom no good thing is begun and none is brought to completion, graciously listen to our prayers, and defend with Thy protection, this servant, on whom we have placed in Thy holy Name the holy habit of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, from all dangers of mind and body: grant him to persevere to the end in his holy resolution, that, having obtained the remission of his sins, he may merit to attain to the company of Thy saints.

It has been said, and to some extent it is true, that a postulant (one who is seeking) is looking at the religious life of the community he wishes to join; whereas, in the novitiate, the community is looking at him. Of course, the latter applies as well to the postulancy. The novitiate, however, is more intense, and it entails learning the way of the religious life, especially the live of prayer, the observance of the evangelical counsels, the obligations of the Rule and Constitutions of the Congregation, and its charism.

Let us pray for Brother Paul Mary that he “perseveres unto the end” and that he merits to attain at the end of his life “the company of the saints.”



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EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS

Ex Cathedra: “There is but one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all is saved” (Pope Innocent III, Fourth Lateran Council, 1215).

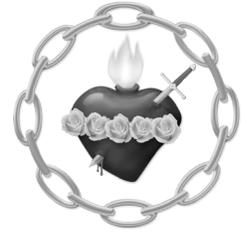
Ex Cathedra: “We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Pope Boniface VIII, the Bull *Unam Sanctam*, 1302).

Ex Cathedra: “The most Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes, and preaches that none of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can have a share in life eternal; but that they will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before death they are joined with Her; and that so important is the unity of this ecclesiastical body that only those remaining within this unity can profit by the sacraments of the Church unto salvation, and they alone can receive an eternal recompense for their fasts, their almsgivings, their other works of Christian piety and the duties of a Christian soldier. No one, let his almsgiving be as great as it may, no one, even if he pour out his blood for the Name of Christ, can be saved, unless he remain within the bosom and the unity of the Catholic Church” (Pope Eugene IV, the Bull *Cantate Domino*, 1441).

Notes:

- For more information, including videos and a free class, go to the Saint Augustine Institute: www.saintaugustineinstitute.org

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