It was an innocent question.

It was, in fact, one of the most innocent questions ever asked in the entire history of the world. This astonishing claim I urge with great confidence because the question under consideration was asked by Her who was perfectly and uniquely innocent — immaculate, in fact, and full of grace.

Our Lady was a good question asker. Of Her “seven words” recorded in Holy Scripture, two are questions, both of which are recorded by Saint Luke.

A cynic might accuse me of saying very much based upon very little. How can a woman who asked only two questions be so good at it?

We have quality in mind, not quantity. Quality, not so much in the formulation of the questions — although She was quite good at that too — but in knowing what to ask, and why, and how to react. Above all, She did what many of us do not do, even when we ask questions we find quite clever: She listened attentively and pondered what she heard. Moreover, in both instances the resulting answer and Her cooperation with it were fruitful for Her own sanctification and for the salvation of the world.

Her first question, which is also Her “first word,” is recorded in Luke 1:34: “And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man?”

We know how She was answered. In Her question, She had tested the spirit (cf. I John 4:1). Having received the reply, She prudently scrutinized the words of Saint Gabriel, saw that this course of action would in no way violate Her vow of chastity, and gave Her consent to what was evidently a divine proposal. What resulted was the Incarnation of the Logos and the consequent salvation of the world.

Our Lady listened very well in this conversation with Saint Gabriel. Beyond correctly discerning his words regarding the Incarnation, She attended to a fact that the Angel reported in order to illustrate the real possibility of a virginal conception, namely, the pregnancy of Her elderly cousin Elizabeth, who was previously barren. Mary heard these words and, after giving Her consent to the Incarnation, charitably acted upon them by betaking Herself “with haste” to the hill country of Juda, there to assist Her cousin.

Now, we can look at the second question, which is Her “fifth word.” It comes from the next chapter of Saint Luke, in the context of the fifth joyful mystery of the Rosary, the Finding of Our Lord in the Temple. Here, Mary and Joseph have just found Jesus “in the midst of the doctors”:

And seeing him, they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? did you not know, that I must be about my father’s business? And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men. (Luke 2:48-53)

Our Lord, at twelve years old, had just astonished with “his wisdom and his answers” (Luke 2:47) the very doctors of the law — the teachers, that is, who spent their days studying the Mosaic Law. He astonished them by “hearing them, and asking them questions” (2:46). While some commentators note that Jesus was showing His humility by asking questions and not simply teaching his elders, asking questions as a method of teaching has long been conventional. This pedagogical technique, famously employed by Socrates, is still used today. It was most certainly standard practice in the Rabbinical schools of Our Lord’s time.

Our Lord always did the will of His Father: “I do always the things that please him” (John 8:29). It was evidently His Father’s...
will, and therefore the will of the Holy Trinity (for the Three Persons have one Will in common) that Mary and Joseph would suffer this pain of losing our Lord in the Temple, which pain constitutes the third of Our Lady’s seven sorrows. The Incarnate Logos willed this sorrow in common with His Father and the Holy Ghost, and His sacred humanity asserted to this divine plan — which means that the human intellect of Our Lord knew of it, His will consented to it completely, and His twelve-year-old human operations carried out all that was necessary to implement it. If the theory is true that Joseph and Mary made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem in a caravan that was divided according to sex, and that, at Jesus’ age, He could have been with either the men or the women, then Jesus carried on in such a way as to allow His Mother to think He was with Saint Joseph and vice-versa. (They would have discovered Him missing when the whole caravan met together at some interval on the way.) This would mean that a Divine Person, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, arranged it so that “Joseph most prudent,” and “the most prudent Virgin” — to accord them titles from their respective litanies — both operated under these false impressions.

When She asked Our Lord, “Son, why hast thou done so to us?”, the Virgin knew that He was no ordinary twelve-year-old. She knew that He was the “son of the Most High” (Luke 1:32), the “Son of God” (Luke 1:35), the “Lord” (Luke 1:43), and the “prophet of the Highest” (Luke 1:76). She knew, then, that neither adolescent mischief nor youthful distraction had occasioned this painful and inconvenient separation of three days. She knew that He acted with a purpose. But what might that purpose have been?

In reply, Our Lady received not one, but two questions from Our Lord: “How is it that you sought me? did you not know, that I must be about my father’s business?”

There is a joke about an Irish-American who frequently answered questions with questions. It seems a non-Irish American was exasperated by this habit and fumed, “Why do you Irish insist on answering a question with a question?” To which the son of Erin earnestly replied, “What’s wrong with that?”

Answering questions with questions is often a deflection. But in the case of the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, it evidently serves a higher purpose. It would seem to me that this purpose is to challenge, to invite God’s friend to “go up higher” (Luke 14:10). In the case of Our Lady, She rose to the challenge, for, although She “understood not the word that he spoke unto them,” She “kept all these words in her heart.” That is, She contemplated the words of the Divine Word. Given Her past performance, we must assume that this pondering was fruitful.

Without pretending to have Her wisdom, we ought to imitate the virtues She here displays, and try to contemplate His words. So why did Our Lord “do so” to Our Lady and Saint Joseph? Surely, this is a mystery about which we can know something, if not everything. To say that it was God’s will that He did so would be true, but not sufficient. All that Jesus did was God’s will, yet we can find additional and more specific explanations of His various acts beyond that general truth. Here are my personal speculations, presented in no particular order, which the reader may take or leave:

- That Our Lady could experience, in mystical fashion, the sorrow of sinners who “lose God” by mortal sin. She could not experience the reality of such a loss, but this painful separation must have given her innocent mind a powerful image of the anguished state of the sinner who knows his separation from God. This knowledge would suit her office as “Mother of Mercy.”
- That the Doctors of the Law, whom Jesus had already “astonished,” might overhear this conversation. Had they indeed heard it, Our Lord’s reference to God as His Father would not have been lost on them. If they desired to check Our Lord’s (Messianic) lineage, they could do so conveniently; the records were kept in the Temple. Perhaps they kept this knowledge among themselves, and this explains the sympathetic hearing that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus later gave Our Lord.
- That Saint Joseph would have a mystical experience, ahead of time, of the sacred triduum that would happen only after his holy death. Jesus was lost, but then found on the third day. Mary would experience the triduum in actual reality; the Patriarch of Nazareth would not. (Saint Ambrose notes that the finding in the temple is an allegory of the Resurrection.)
- To give us the saintly example of Mary and Joseph in the face of sorrow and affliction. When She did not understand the mystery of God’s ways, Mary did not protest them, but silently kept these things in Her Heart. Such a contemplative approach to life’s problems, under the influence of grace, is bound to be fruitful.
- To give the world an example of detachment from parents in the pursuit of God’s will. If Jesus was detached from such worthy and good parents for the purpose of doing God’s will, a fortiori must we be. This includes the matter of vocations and states in life, where misplaced parental affection, as Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori assures us, can often be a hindrance.
- As a sign that the trials, sorrows, and afflictions God
sends us are not a sign that He no longer loves us. God sent Mary numerous sorrows (“O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow” [Lam. 1:12], the Church applies to Her), yet He loved Her more than any other created person. This is an important lesson for our soft, sentimental, and effeminate age. “Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you,” Saint Peter says (I Pet. 5:7), and God sometimes sends us afflictions precisely because of the care — for His glory and for our salvation. But He does so as our Father: “For whom the Lord loveth, He intended to remain in the Temple.”

Related to the preceding point, to show us that, in this way of knowing, the will of good pleasure embraces all the events and circumstances of one’s life, some of which are pleasurable, others painful. God wills these things upon us for His glory and for our good. In his wonderful The Interior Life Simplified and Reduced to Its Fundamental Principle (pg. 138), the Carthusian spiritual writer, Dom François de Sales Pollien (1853-1936), explains this alternation of joys and sorrows that are part of God’s will signified:

He alternates and combines these two ways of acting, intermixing sorrow more or less with joy, prolonging a pleasure or a suffering, replacing the one with the other, just as in the material sphere He makes sunshine follow rain, the calm succeed the storm. … [T]he divine operations are almost always an alternation of gifts which console, enlighten, and kindle, and of deprivations which bring desolation, blindness, and impotence. …

What is the reason of the joys and trials of my life? He does not send consolation, indeed, for the puerile purpose of amusing me, nor does He send suffering for the cruel purpose of torturing me. God acts neither as a child nor as an executioner, He acts as a Father; His conduct towards me is always that of one who is serious and fatherly. … He intends to be a Father to me in all things, that is to say, He wishes to give me His life. And to lead me unto life, He is bent upon liberating me and encouraging me. He is bent upon liberating me, and this is the chief reason of my sufferings. He is bent upon encouraging me, and this is the chief reason for my consolations.

Our Lady’s Sorrows were for God’s glory and the salvation of souls, but they were not expiatory for sin — at least not for Her sins, because She had none. Our Lady did not have to do penance for sin or be weaned away from inordinate attachments as we do. This is one difference between Her sorrows and ours. We deserve them; She did not. For the Immaculate One, the sorrows God sent Her were those of a Mother, who would also be Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix of grace. They would therefore be sublimely fruitful for Her children.

There was a great elapse of time between Our Lady’s fifth and sixth words, a long silence of eighteen years. Her sixth and seventh words were spoken at the Wedding Feast of Cana, and recorded by Saint John. She asked no questions on that occasion, but made one brief declarative statement to Jesus, “They have no wine” (John 2:3) and one brief imperative statement to the waiters, “Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye” (John 2:5). In the sixth word, She presents Her divine Son with a problem to solve; in the seventh (and last), She commanded men to assist Him in solving it. Jesus then publicly set about His Father’s business by working His “beginning of miracles” that “manifested his glory” (John 2:11).

It seems that all those years of keeping His words in Her Heart had borne fruit.

Email Brother André Marie at bam@catholicism.org
Today we assess seven special benefits that should be yours, dear Reader. You should already be eligible for these amazing perks and so let’s take a few minutes to consider them.

A quick overview of these perks shows seven:

1. You will gradually attain a perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ;
2. Your soul will be purified of sin;
3. You will have victory over all your enemies;
4. The practice of virtue will be made easy for you;
5. You will be set on fire with the love of our Lord;
6. You will be enriched with graces and merits;
7. You will be supplied with what is needed to pay all your debts to God and to your fellow-men

And now, we unpack your benefit package.

“A perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ” is nothing to despise! Since knowledge of God causes love of God, a “perfect knowledge” of the God-Man has to be accompanied by a perfect love of Him. That means, not only the state of grace, but the knowledge and love that fully matures and dawns as the Beatific Vision in Eternity. Hence, the first is a cumulative perk that only accrues fully in eternity.

Perk number two: Who doesn’t see the value in having our “soul purified of sin”? As we progress in the spiritual life, we become more and more painfully aware of the ugliness of sin and its repulsive qualities to God. A guarantee that our soul will be purified from all of that sewage is sweet indeed!

If you are trying to live a spiritual life you may often feel overwhelmed. Fighting enemies near and far in the World, the Flesh and the Devil we certainly feel our weakness. The guarantee of “victory over all” of these is a heartening third perk in the midst of the fray.

“The practice of virtue” is not for the faint of heart. It is the most difficult thing we can possibly do. Perk number four is like an intravenous of strength which “makes the practice of virtue easy.” Not “easier” mind you, but “EASY.” What an energizer! What a spur to action!

All of the Saints were “on fire with the love of Our Lord.” How did they get that intense and fiery union with Him which overflowed upon the earth in volcanic streams of love for souls? Well, you can get that fire, dear Reader, from perk number five!

Have you ever heard of someone “striking it rich”? The goldmine of perk six will “enrich” you with “graces and merits.” Now that’s the coinage of Heaven!

And, wouldn’t you be excited if you were told you had inherited five million dollars? Well, that is sawdust compared with the wealth this perk will bequeath to you! Yes, you will, by the fortune you will acquire, “be able to pay all of your debts to God and to your fellow men.” Have you ever heard of such wealth?

In case that is not enough, dear Reader, there is a final general clause in this set of perks. This states that you are guaranteed “all kinds of graces from God.” After the list above, I will leave it to your meditative imagination to guess what that could possibly mean...

“Too good to be true”? But of course! Unless, dear Reader, you are Catholic and are praying the Rosary devoutly, meditating on the Sacred Mysteries.

The above list of benefits can be found in The Secret of the Rosary by Saint Louis Marie de Montfort in the twenty-seventh rose.

I will give a final accolade of Saint Louis Marie: “If you say the Rosary faithfully until death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory. For even if you are now on the brink of damnation, even if you have one foot in hell, even if you have sold your soul to the devil...sooner or later you will be converted and will amend your life and save your soul. If you say the Rosary devoutly every day of your life.”

And, I would like to add here, dear Reader, that the times we are living in are much more intense for this Business of Salvation than those of Saint Louis Marie. To that list of seven perks we can add a special set of graces that were not given in Saint Louis’ time, but only now. They are expressed to us by Sister Lucy of Fatima:

“The most holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or, above all, spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families, of the families of the world,
or of the religious communities, or even of the life of peoples and nations, that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the holy Rosary. With the holy Rosary, we will save ourselves; we will sanctify ourselves; we will console our Lord and obtain the salvation of many souls.”

As we daily face the “diabolical disorientation” of our day (“these last times”) we have every reason to be confident.

Take heart, dear Reader! The victory is already assured and we simply need to cooperate with our Queen and Mother to be part of it! We have now gone exponentially beyond the seven perks....

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"Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you" (St. Matt. 7:7). When you knock, you don’t knock only once; you tap the door multiple times. In another parable Our Lord teaches us how we should pray when He gives us the story of the unjust judge (St. Luke 18). You might raise the question, “why did Our Lord make him unjust?” The answer is “To make the story more challenging, more pointed.” This woman had to come after the judge over and over again. When you bring up the Sermon on the Mount with some people, they immediately get into how the sermon prohibits vain repetition. And when you ask them what is meant by vain repetition, they respond, “things like the Rosary.” We Catholics, when it comes to the Rosary, say, “Repetition? Yes. Vain repetition? Absolutely not!” The only way to keep your mind on the same subject is to keep repeating the same things. ...

Think about this one short phrase that is so easy to remember, so easy to keep on your mind for an hour, “where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also” (St. Matt. 6:21). If I wanted to think about this verse for an hour, what would be the way to do it? To repeat it. Now, to go back to the defense of the Rosary, some of the proud heretics say, “I would much rather say my own prayers to God; I would never repeat anything.” And you say, “Suppose you talk to the Mother of God and say, ‘I love you,’ wouldn’t you like to say it again?” Try to imagine two businessmen chatting together in Boston. Suppose that both of them are religious people, one a Protestant and the other a Catholic. Suppose that the Protestant admits that it is good for a businessman, good for his personal business, that, just as he takes time for lunch and even time for rest, he have twenty minutes a day dedicated to prayer. Suppose the Catholic man holds the same principle. The Catholic businessman, on his break, stops, let’s say, at St. Anthony’s Shrine on Arch Street, and takes twenty minutes to pray a chaplet of the Rosary. The Protestant retires to whatever Protestant temple, if there is one available, and makes his own prayers. Now just try and think of what happened in the mind of that Catholic in those twenty minutes. It looks like the Protestant man has an awful lot to offer God, something seemingly quite precious. The Catholic man would have far more of a precious thing. He would probably review one third of the liturgy of the entire year. He would be summarizing all that God has revealed in Holy Scripture. He could offer the Rosary for a very personal intention. And he is constantly supplying terms that keep his heart directed towards true treasures. Does he repeat? Yes. Is what he repeats vain? No. Our Lord was prohibiting vain repetition because that is all the heathen do (Matthew 6:7); they repeat meaningless (at best) words in their mantras.

[From the Editor] To be precise the Douay passage in Matthew does not use the exact word “vain” nor the word “repetition.” The term “vain repetition” is actually from the King James Bible. Our Catholic Douay has Our Lord condemning the Pharisees for praying ostentatiously so as to be “seen by men” and teaching His disciples not to “speak much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard” (Matthew 6:7). After which He gives them the Our Father prayer. •
The Holy Habit of a Slave

Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm....
(Cant. 8:6)

The Tunic: O Lord, clothe me with the angelic habit and make me a new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth.*

The Belt and Rosary: Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity and quench in my heart the fire of concupiscence, that the virtue of continence and chastity may abide in me. While I call to mind the cord with which you were bound, bind me to your heart and to your service, and arm me with the weapon of the Holy Rosary.

The Capuche (kə-ˈpoosh): Place, O Lord, on my head, the helmet of salvation, that I may resist the assaults of the devil by the maternal protection of the Immaculate whom I bear in my heart and over my heart.

* Text taken from the clothing prayers the brothers recite when dressing. Each garment is first kissed.
An External Sign of our Consecration

“Put on the new man” (Eph. 4:24) as a Slave of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Live the consecrated life of poverty, chastity, and obedience under the Augustinian Rule, in an apostolate dedicated to the conversion of America and the preservation and restoration of Catholic tradition. Ours is a “mixed” life of activity and contemplation, at the service of the Queen of Heaven for the glory of the Holy Trinity and the extension of the one, true Church—outside of which no one at all can be saved.

Are you called?

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When Our Savior was scourged at the pillar He was lashed all over His Sacred Body, front and back. These marks from the Roman scourge can be seen on the Holy Shroud. One wound that cannot be seen on the Shroud but which was opened by the bone-studded whips was on the shoulder.

As Jesus walked the three miles from Pilate’s courtyard to Calvary, the Cross dug into His torn shoulder, ripping off the flesh to the bone. We know this from private revelations not from the Gospels.

The first saint to venerate the shoulder wound of Christ was Saint Bernard of Clairvaux who died in 1153. He received this reply when he asked Jesus which was His most painful wound:

“...I had on My Shoulder while I bore My Cross on the Way of Sorrows, a grievous Wound which was more painful than the others, and which is not recorded by men. Honor this Wound with thy devotion, and I will grant thee whatsoever thou dost ask through its virtue and merit. And in regard to all those who shall venerate this Wound, I will remit to them all their venial sins, and will no longer remember their mortal sins.”

Is this not an astounding promise, so generous, so merciful?

Saint Bernard composed this beautiful prayer to honor the shoulder wound of Our Savior:

“Most loving Jesus, meek Lamb of God, I, a miserable sinner, salute and worship the most Sacred Wound of Thy Shoulder on which Thou didst bear Thy heavy Cross which so tore Thy flesh and laid bare Thy Bones as to inflict on Thee an anguish greater than any other wound of Thy Most Blessed Body. I adore Thee, O Jesus most sorrowful; I praise and glorify Thee, and give Thee thanks for this most sacred and painful Wound, beseeching Thee by that exceeding pain, and by the crushing burden of Thy heavy Cross to be merciful to me, a sinner, to forgive me all my mortal and venial sins, and to lead me on towards Heaven along the Way of Thy Cross. Amen.”

Another saint who not only venerated the shoulder wound of Christ but suffered it along with his stigmata was Padre Pio. According to Stefano Campanella, author of *Il Papa e il Frate* (The Pope and the Friar), Pope John Paul II visited Padre Pio while he was a priest and he asked Padre Pio the same question as to which was his most painful wound. Father Wojtyla expected that the stigmatist would say that it was his pierced side. But the saint replied: “It is my shoulder wound, which no one knows about and has never been cured or treated.” Padre Pio died on September 23, in 1968.

Forty years later, Frank Rega wrote a book about Saint Padre Pio. Here are a couple of relevant paragraphs:

“At one time, Padra (sic) had confided to Brother Modestino Fucci, now the doorkeeper at Padre Pio’s friary in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, that his greatest pains occurred when he changed his undershirt. Brother Modestino, like Father Wojtyla, thought that Padre Pio was referring to pains from the chest wound. Then, on February 4, 1971, Brother Modestino was assigned the task of taking an inventory of all the items in the deceased Padre’s cell in the friary, and also his belongings in the archives. That day he discovered that one of Padre Pio’s undershirts bore a circle of bloodstains in the area of the right shoulder.

“On that very evening, Brother Modestino asked Padre Pio in prayer to enlighten him about the meaning of the bloodstained undershirt. He asked Padre to give him a sign if he truly bore Christ’s shoulder wound. Then he went to sleep,
awakening at 1:00 a.m. with a terrible, excruciating pain in his shoulder, as if he had been sliced with a knife up to the shoulder bone. He felt that he would die from the pain if it continued, but it lasted only a short time. Then the room became filled with the aroma of a heavenly perfume of flowers—the sign of Padre Pio’s spiritual presence—and he heard a voice saying “This is what I had to suffer!” (Patheos, Seasons of Grace)

The Shoulder Wound Prefigured in the Old Testament

Thou shalt take the fat of the ram, and the rump, and the fat that covereth the lungs, and the caul of the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and the right shoulder, because it is the ram of consecration. And one roll of bread, a cake tempered with oil, a wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread, which is set in the sight of the Lord. And thou shalt put all upon the hands of Aaron and of his sons, and shalt sanctify them elevating before the Lord. And thou shalt take all from their hands, and shalt burn them upon the altar for a holocaust, a most sweet savour in the sight of the Lord, because it is his oblation.

Thou shalt take also the breast of the ram, wherewith Aaron was consecrated, and elevating it thou shalt sanctify it before the Lord, and it shall fall to thy share. And thou shalt sanctify both the consecrated breast, and the shoulder that thou didst separate of the ram, Wherewith Aaron was consecrated and his sons, and they shall fall to Aaron’s share and his sons’ by a perpetual right from the children of Israel: because they are the choicest and the beginnings of their peace victims which they offer to the Lord. (Exodus 29:22-28).

In the ritual instructions God gave to Moses for the consecrating of Aaron and his sons in their office of priesthood the right shoulder of the ram is to be set apart with the breast and the fat and the liver and kidneys and offered with unleavened bread as a holocaust to the Lord. Aaron and his sons alone, after their consecration, are to receive a part of the breast and the shoulder of the ram as a “perpetual right ... because they are the beginnings of their peace victims which they offer to the Lord.” In the case of the ram being used for a “peace offering” (as differentiated from a “sin offering”) the priests were to eat the breast and shoulder meat and burn what was left over (see also Leviticus chapters 3 and 7).

These instructions are repeated again in Leviticus, Dueternonomy, and Numbers, with the “right shoulder” of the ram being mentioned eleven more times.

As I read through this chapter of Exodus it occurred to me that the right shoulder of the ram could well be a figure of the right shoulder of Our Lord as the sacrificial Lamb of God. Let it be remembered, however, that the bones of the Paschal Lamb were not to be broken, as no bone of the Crucified Savior was broken. (Exodus 12:46 and John 19:36) The lamb, that is the young sheep, was the more preferred figure of the Divine Victim on account of its silence in being led to slaughter, rather than the ram, which is a matured male sheep.

It would then be on His right shoulder that Jesus carried the Cross.

Email Brian Kelly at bdk@catholicism.org

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You may have read the famous sonnet by Elizabeth Barret Browning entitled, “How Do I Love Thee?” It is sonnet number 43, taken from The Sonnets From the Portuguese, a book first published in 1850. It was dedicated to her husband, poet Robert Browning.

The poem identifies different types of love, tabulating them and classifying them, in a sense, codifying them. But her poem describes a deep love, from a woman to the man she loves. The first line is, “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.” Let us examine this statement from the point of view of what man’s love might be to God.

How do I love Thee, my dear Lord? I love Thee from the time I wake early in the morning to greet Thee. I love Thee with my first spiritual act, the Sign of the Cross. Miserable soul that I am, I seek Thee out to speak with Thee in those quiet moments as I meditate upon Thee to adore Thee, to show Thee my love, and to ask Thee to increase it so there is only Thee, and nothing of me. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

[Note: Our Lord, as I am sure the reader remembers, cited this passage in His response to the Pharisees when they ( tempting Him ) asked Him which was the greatest commandment. Each of the three synoptic gospels record this encounter.]

I love Thee as Thou has blessed me so many times, every day, more than seventy times seven.

I love Thee as Thou has given me a Guardian Angel to whom Thy Love commits me here. He is ever at my side to light and guard, to rule and guide me. I love Thee and I wish to do all for Thee. “All that we do without offering it to God is wasted,” says Saint John Marie Vianney.

I love Thee, and wish to please Thee, so I love my neighbour as myself. “Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18).

I love Thee as I go about my daily duties, interjecting and punctuating the day with prayer, the Angelus, Grace Before and After Meals, a Three O’clock prayer, Spiritual Communions — of which I should do more, many more, since I wish to have Thee with me at every moment.

I love Thee when Thou gave me Thy mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate One, especially since she is also my mistress, my queen; the one to whom I am a happy slave.

I love Thee as I make my Act of Perfect Consecration to Jesus Christ the Incarnate Wisdom through Holy Slavery to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. (True Devotion by Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort.)

I love Thee as I pray the holy Rosary of Thy mother, considering and reviewing each incident in Thy life — kissing the crucifix often — remembering all Thy sufferings and joys.

I love Thee in Thy angels and in Thy saints. “With Thy saints to sing Thy love.” (From the Anima Christi prayer after Communion)

I love Thee when Thou blessest me with Thy real Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist. It is that moment I wish never to end.

I love Thee as I hold the picture of Thy Holy Face in my hands and kiss the wound on Thy brow. I love Thee as I consider that wound, and the others caused by the 72 thorns placed on Thy head. “I wish that My face, which reflects the deep pains of My soul, the sorrow and love of My heart, be better honoured. Who contemplates Me consoles Me.” (First Friday in Lent, 1936, Jesus to Blessed Sister Maria Pierina)

I love Thy Most Holy Face and am truly sorry I have hurt Thee by so frequently doing what is wrong, neglecting to do all the good works I ought. I wish to console Thee, my dear Lord, and to share in the tremendous love Thou hast for me. (Novena in Honor of the Holy Face of Jesus, Second Day.)

I love Thee knowing Thou graced me and made me a Catholic, knowing that grace was the ticket to Heaven.

I love Thee as Thou has given me not only my very soul, my very life, but all my sufferings and benefits, each one...
truly a blessing as they come from Thee.

I love Thee God, as the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost — three Persons in one God. I love Thee as the Creator of all, and me, and my loved ones. I love Thee as the Son, who died for me to reopen Heaven. I love Thee as the Holy Spirit, giving me Thy gifts and fruits in Confirmation to make me truly a spiritual soldier; counseling me; protecting the Church.

I love Thee as Thou art righteous and true, not like men.
I love Thee as Thy promises are never broken.
I love Thee as Thou art loyal, faithful, kind and merciful.
I love Thee as Thou art almighty,
I love Thee for giving me all the sacraments. I love Thy mercy for giving me the sacrament of mercy, Confession, where I can have my sins washed away. I know I love Thee, dear Lord, since Thou can transform those forgiven sins into perfect flowers of Thy Love.
I love Thee because Thou can bring good out of evil: “If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool” (Isaias 1:18). [My own addition]

I love Thee and try to tell all I meet about Thee. “If you really love God, you will greatly desire to see Him loved by all the world.” (Saint John Marie Vianney)

And, I love Thee because Thou hast said there is no greater love than to lay down [one’s] life for [one’s] friends (John 15:13).

I have loved Thee always, although I have acted to the contrary on so many occasions! As a child, I loved Thee purely and innocently and hope to repeat that time in my life as I come to Thee again as a child of Thy Love; “Amen I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it” (Mark 10:15).

And, I hate what is in me that is displeasing to Thee.
I love Thee, my dear God, because Thou art Love Itself!

Are You Called to Be a Teaching Brother?

Do you have a vocation to teach? Do you have a vocation to be a religious Brother? Not sure, but wish to discern? Then consider becoming an intern working in our school while exploring the life of a Brother in the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Delayed vocations (men in their 30s or 40s), who are degreed and have teaching experience, are also welcome to look into our religious life.

Contact: Br. André Marie at (603)239-6485 or bam@Catholicism.org
Philosophia Perennis, the true philosophy, prides itself on being, quite literally, useless. This means that it is not studied because it is useful for something else, that it is a means to another end such as medicine, carpentry, psychology, husbandry, etc. It is studied as an end in itself. After all, philosophy is a seeking after wisdom and what could be a good less practical than or more lofty than wisdom? One does not study philosophy as a means of building better buildings or making better roads or healing people with greater success.

When one has completed his formal studies in philosophy, he is not qualified for anything else besides being a “philosopher.” Of course, he can teach philosophy to others; he can write about philosophical topics; he can engage in philosophical discussions; he can attempt to solve philosophical problems; etc. But he will never find a way of applying his education directly to some practical or useful matter. One does not reach into his philosophical toolbox and find directions for siding his house or plowing a field or sending a rocket into outer space. This is not the purpose of philosophy.

Brother Francis compared philosophy to a flashlight or floodlight which illuminates everything else around it. While it does not directly “do” anything, it helps us to see better when we attempt to fix or make anything, so we are more likely to perform any or all of these practical tasks with greater success. Ideas have consequences and, often, far-reaching effects. Let us take a look at some, by no means all, of the things that philosophy, by clarifying our thinking about the most important matters, helps us do better.

First, when we read something, anything from short newspaper articles to book-length works, we are far less likely to be taken in by the errors, assumptions or confusions of the author. Brother compares a good philosopher to a bee that is able to go into the heart of a thistle and extract the nectar without getting hurt by the thorns. For example, I recently read a book entitled “The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine and the Birth of Right and Left” by Yuval Levin. I had the opportunity to discuss it with another of Brother’s philosophy students, and we immediately shared a common understanding of many of the ideas that were expressed by the author. We could easily ferret out several of the author’s assumptions and major premises and discuss how these influenced the author’s presentation of their debate.

Second, when students of philosophy write something, we are much more able to express our ideas with clarity and avoid common, but often unstated, pitfalls of thought such as indifferentism, socialism, unbridled capitalism, idealism, egalitarianism, pragmatism, and relativism. Philosophy may not help us to avoid most grammatical errors, but the study of propositions and the syllogism helps us to formulate our sentences and arguments with more precision and concision. As I write these very words, my thoughts are guided by a whole host of philosophical ideas. While they may not have improved my syntax, I have avoided myriad potential errors.

Third, a background in good philosophy helps students who must attend secular or heretical religious colleges for vocational training to ward off the unwholesome influences of erring or even radicalized professors or peers. He knows the answer to the tricky question that confuses the typical college sophomore: “If a tree falls in a forest and there is no one around to hear it, does it make a sound?” When he is taught by some serious-looking professor that he descended from some irrational creature, he knows that this is false and he knows why, because he understands ideas such as substance, change and contingency. When he is told about “artificial intelligence” and, someday, computers will be able to think like humans, he knows this is
impossible, since they are only capable of transient action. He is able to sort out the ideas that further his real education and reject those that are designed to destroy his common sense and good moral behavior. In fact, he understands what moral behavior is and what it is in practice.

Fourth, as the “handmaid of theology,” philosophy assists those who engage in apologetics of the Catholic Faith. It allows for the quick understanding of the errors of people who are not yet Catholic. (Unfortunately, no amount of philosophy can provide enough light to overcome some of the emotional objections to the Faith.) We know the difference between someone who is naturally good but refuses to join the One True Church and someone who is a sinner but remains within the fold of the Church. We can quickly see through the fallacy of those who argue for Predestination. We know the difference between “communion” in a Protestant assembly and the Sacrament of Holy Communion that is provided in a Catholic Church, and that it is a difference in substance.

Fifth, even our every-day interpersonal encounters are positively enlivened and enlightened by Philosophia Perennis. When we understand with conviction what is the nature of a human person, that it is a complete and incommunicable substance with a material body and a spiritual soul that will last forever, our interactions with others are elevated to a level that is impossible without such understanding. “How to Win Friends and Influence People” may provide techniques for making such engagements more pleasant and effective, but philosophy provides the overriding purpose for all but the most casual of encounters. When we know that all men have free will, we are not surprised when others respond to our requests in ways that are often unpredictable. On the other hand, when we are blessed to have friends who share a similar education in philosophy, any conversation can immediately aspire to a height that would otherwise be unattainable.

Sixth, meditation and contemplation are enhanced by philosophy. The better the understanding of the great ideas of philosophy, the more one benefits from meditating on the Mysteries of the Faith. Even our purely secular day dreams are more enjoyable and productive when illuminated by philosophy. Simply knowing the distinction between a phantasm and an idea enhances the most mundane of experiences. How different is the thought of a beautiful meadow with flowers blooming and birds singing when one can go beyond the mere enjoyment of the senses, when one immediately or reflexively considers the beauty and order of nature, when one relishes the harmony of its unique, individual substances, and when one grasps the purpose for which everything was made.

Seventh, our participation at the Mass is deeper and more satisfying when philosophy is allowed to illuminate truths of the Faith that are unfolded before us. For example, because we understand substance and accident, when we look at the elevated host, we have a deeper realization that the bread has been changed in the most profound way possible; it is no longer the same substance that it was just a few moments before. When we receive Holy Communion, we can marvel over the nature of communion and the astonishing thing that is taking place both in our bodies and in our souls. The many holy symbols that are found in a Catholic Church mean more to us when we understand the concepts of symbol and analogy.

While it is true that philosophy is “useless” because it does not directly provide the ability to do anything in the practical realm and is studied for its own sake, it is a profound means of elevating, enlightening, clarifying, enhancing, and sharing everything we do, every single day of our lives. And, speaking of a “day,” philosophy even affords us a greater appreciation of time itself, both as a measure of motion and as something that will inevitably run out for all of us.

Saint Augustine Institute of Wisdom

The Saint Augustine Institute of Wisdom (SAI) is the educational division of Saint Benedict Center. The Institute provides well-rounded and conveniently simple courses of instruction in Catholic thought.

The course will have the aspect of continued adult education: Catholic men and women, in any ordinary occupation in life, increasing their knowledge of the Faith, and of things pertaining to it.

OUR CRUSADE:
The propagation and defense of Catholic dogma — especially *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* — and the conversion of America to the one, true Church.

PRAYERS FOR THE HOLY FATHER
V. Let us pray for our pontiff, Pope Francis.
R. The Lord preserve him, and give him life, and make him to be blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies (Roman Breviary).
Our Father. Hail Mary.
V. Let us pray.
R. Almighty and everlasting God, have mercy upon Thy servant, Francis, our Supreme Pontiff, and direct him, according to Thy loving kindness, in the way of eternal salvation; that, of thy gift, he may ever desire that which is pleasing unto Thee and may accomplish it with all his might. Through Christ our Lord. Amen (Roman Ritual).

EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS

*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).

Notes:
• SAI: For more information, including videos and a free class, go to the Saint Augustine Institute: www.SaintAugustineInstitute.org
• More articles, newsletters, commentary on news and all things concerning the Faith, visit our website: Catholicism.org

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