Our Lady of Lourdes
W ith the first Sunday of Advent we began the new liturgical year. The Church once again relives the Mysteries of Christ for a whole year. She also summarizes all of history, from Creation to the end of time. The four Sundays of Advent symbolizing the four thousand years of the Old Testament (if we rely on the Vulgate, not the Septuagint), we are, as it were, mystically transported back to the time before the Incarnation of the Man-God. It is opportune, then, to dwell during this time on the Law of types and figures to see New-Testament realities hidden in it.

Saint Augustine has it that *novum testamentum in veteri latet*. Vetus testamentum in novo patet — “the New Testament is hidden in the Old. The Old Testament is revealed in the New”. This canon of interpretation is a standard part of the Catholic approach to the Bible. Let us look, then, for the Blessed Trinity “hidden” in the Old Testament.

We begin at the beginning, Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created heaven, and earth.” The Hebrew for “God created” is *bara Elohim*, which has the linguistic peculiarity of a plural noun followed by a singular verb, something which actually does not violate the grammatical rules of Hebrew. The particular kind of plural here used means three or more, (there is, in Hebrew, a plural that indicates only two). A conventional way of dismissing the trinitarian interpretation of this name for God is to say that it is a plurality of divine Persons. However, the term “Elohim” again and again concerns the builders of the Tower of Babel. Therefore, since Moses, inspired by the Holy Ghost, wrote *bara Elohim*, literally, ‘the gods, he-created’ (a plural subject with a singular verb), without doubt we understand the sense of these words: he means plurality of divine Persons in the word *Elohim* and the unity of essence in the singular verb, ‘he-created.’ That is to say, three divine Persons are not three gods, but one God. (*Explicatio in Genesim*, Ch. 1, cited in Clough, Daniel M., *Genesis According to the Saints*, p. 5)

Nobody, of course, says that this passage *proves* that there is one God in three divine Persons. That would be a reach. But it does foreshadow what the New Testament later reveals clearly when it indicates a plurality of Persons in the Godhead.

We can say the same about two other passages in Genesis where the so-called “plural of majesty” is found: “And he said: Let us make man to our image and likeness…” (Gen. 1:26), and “Come ye, therefore, let us go down, and there confound their tongue, that they may not understand one another’s speech” (Gen. 11:7). The first is the divine utterance preceding the creation of Adam, while the second concerns the builders of the Tower of Babel.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God. He was not speaking to the angels, in whose image man was not created, but to Himself in Gen. 1:26. In both Latin and English, we have a plural hortatory subjunctive verb, “Let us make…” in verse 26, followed in the next verse by the singular indicative verb, “God created.” This is substantially the same in the language of inspiration: see an interlinear translation of the Hebrew — v. 26 and v. 27 — for proof.

In confounding the tongues at Babel, there is a similar structure: in Genesis 11:7, the two verbs for “let us go down and confound…” are plural, while the subsequent verse eight has a singular verb for “the Lord [Yahweh] scattered….”

In both cases, Moses was privileged to know — and we to read — the internal counsels of God, speaking in a plurality of Persons.

Remaining in Genesis for one more account, we turn to Chapters eighteen and nineteen, where Moses relates the interaction of the three angels with Abraham and then with Lot. This is the account that terminates in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The whole thing is quite mystical, for Genesis alternately calls these three persons “men” and “angels” — as do the Gospels, by the way, concerning the angels who appeared to the women after the Resurrection. More mysterious is that these three angels show up just after Genesis eighteen mentions that “Yahweh” appeared to Abraham, of whose appearance *nothing else is said*, unless we assume that the appearance of the three angels is the appearance of Yahweh. Moreover, Abraham “adored down to the ground. And he said: Lord [Adonai], if I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant” (Gen. 18:2-3).

If these angels did not stand in the place of God, such an act would be a shocking violation of the Old Testament’s strict monotheism. By comparison, when Saint John bowed down to the feet of an angel (Apoc. 22:8-9), the angel stayed him, and forbidding that he should receive such honors: “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant… Adore God.”
But the angels who received similar honors from Abraham made no such remonstration, probably because they were standing in the Person(s) of God.

Saint Augustine interpreted this passage in a Trinitarian sense in book two of his *On the Trinity*. According to Monsignor Pohle, Saint Augustine was of the opinion that the three angels of Genesis eighteen were just that, angels, not actually God Himself, but their mission was such that the words they spoke were understood to be the words of God; they were, in other words, standing in God’s place. This opinion was shared by Saints Athanasius, Basil, Cyril of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Jerome, Gregory the Great, and others. This “standing in the place of” would help us to make sense out of the Angel’s willingness to allow Abraham to “adore down to the ground”: the adoration was going to the three divine Persons whom they were visibly manifesting.

As can be seen from the list in the last paragraph, it is not only Western but also Eastern Fathers who read this episode as a Trinitarian theophany. One of Christian Russia’s most celebrated icons, the *Trinity*, by Andrei Rublev, is a depiction of Abraham’s hospitality to these three angels, but with a clear Trinitarian interpretation.

Still remaining in the Pentateuch, we come to the Book of Numbers 6:24-27. This is the blessing that God instructed Moses to teach to Aaron and his priestly sons: “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord shew his face to thee, and have mercy on thee. The Lord turn his countenance to thee, and give thee peace.” The blessing is threefold, leading many Christian commentators to see in it the Holy Trinity. Notice that the “face” the Levitical priest wishes God to show us is the second of the three: it is the Holy Face of Jesus!

Many Franciscan priests will use this formula of Numbers six to bless people. The story of how this blessing came to be known as “the blessing of Saint Francis” is edifying.

We pass now to the Prophecy of Isaias, chapter six, which gives us the *Sanctus* in our Holy Mass. Here is what Monsignor Joseph Pohle says on it in his text on the Trinity (pg. 12):

> The clearest allusion to the mystery of the Blessed Trinity in the Old Testament is probably the so-called *Trisagion* [“thrice holy”] of Isaias (VI, 3): “Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of his glory,” which is rightly made much of by many Fathers and not a few theologians. This triple “Holy” [uttered by the seraphim, the highest angelic choir] refers to an ecstatic vision of the Godhead, by which Isaias was solemnly called and consecrated as the Prophet of the Incarnate Word, an office which won for him the title of the “Evangelist” among the four major prophets.

The Hebrew word for “holy” is *Kadosh* (or *qā-ḏō-wōš*). Regarding the tripling of the word, some authors claim that there is no regular way of forming the comparative and superlative degrees of the adjective in Hebrew, and that this triple utterance of the adjective is an effort at the superlative. I’ve seen this contested by others, who say that the tripling of the adjective is merely an “intensifier.” I will let the Hebrew specialists fight it out; either way — whether constrained by the conventions of Hebrew usage or the desire to be “intense” — the Holy Isaias taught us that God is not simply “holy,” but “Holy, holy, holy”; and the Church has seen in this sublime utterance of the seraphim a foreshadowing of the full revelation of the Trinity.

In another indication of plurality in the Godhead, the same Isaias also presents the future Messias as God. Here are some of his descriptions of Christ to come: “the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of Peace… God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come” (Is. 9:6, cf. Luke 1:32); “Emmanuel,” literally, “God with us” (Is. 7:14, cf. Matt. 1:23); “God himself will come and will save you” (Is. 35:4; cf. Matt. 9:5); “Prepare ye the way of the Lord… Behold, the Lord God shall come with strength” (Is. 40:3, 10; cf. Mark 1:3).

Of the Messianic Psalms, I will select only two passages: “The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee” (Ps. 2:7) and “The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand… from the womb before the day star I begot thee” (Ps. 109 [110]:1-3). Here, the Messias is
shown to be the Son of God. Moreover, He is “my [David’s] Lord,” who is at the same time the Son of “the Lord”; He is, in other words, both Son of God and God. During His public life, Our Lord confounded the Pharisees with the mystery hidden in Psalm 109 (cf. Matt. 22:41-46). If they had had good will, His enemies would have asked Him to explain the passage, which was perfectly fulfilled in Himself, but they held their tongues. Concerning Our Lord’s enemies, Saint Augustine pointed out that the unbelieving Jews of His day understood more of Christ’s claims than the Arians did, for the unbelievers understood Him to call Himself God simply because he called God His Father (cf. Jn. 5:18, and Jn. 10:33; note that Jesus did not deny the accusation), whereas the heretics missed that point, and denied Him divine honors. All of this shows a plurality of persons in the Godhead, at least as concerns the Father and the Son.

One last strain of Old-Testament prophesies that show the plurality of persons in God comes to us from the Wisdom Books. To keep this article from getting too long, I will refer the reader to Monsignor Pohle’s page sixteen and following: “The Teaching of the Sapiential Books”.

Those who would like to read more of our offerings on this tremendous Mystery are invited to view a small catalogue of them on Catholicism.org.

The Mystery of the Holy Trinity is a “pure Mystery” or an “absolute Mystery,” meaning both that we have no way of knowing it without the benefit of supernatural revelation, and that we cannot comprehend it fully. Because It is such a Mystery — indeed, It is the greatest of our Mysteries — we cannot know everything about It, but we can know what God has taught us through the Church. And that is both true and sufficient for us to adore the Three:

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!”

Email Brother André Marie at bam@catholicism.org

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Now, dear Reader, it is important that you get the spelling and meaning correct! For “gorgeous”, you just need to look in the mirror. But for Gorgias, you need to travel back in time and space to Ancient Greece.

In summary: Gorgias was an ancient Greek philosopher. These “philosophers” (“lovers of wisdom”) pursued the truth voraciously. However, since they shared the same fallen human nature with us including a darkened intellect, we can sympathize with how they might have gone astray in their pursuit of truth. And, so often they did just that! The study of the History of Philosophy (one of Brother Francis’ eight courses in philosophy) is largely a study of error.

This straying from the truth was done so innocently and so enthusiastically by the ancient philosophers that we can still be amused at it more than two thousand years later. So, for example, the philosopher who taught that the senses were not reliable sources of knowledge had followers who protected him from being run over by passing chariots that he denied were even there. This could make a funny cartoon!

Our philosopher, Gorgias, wrote three famous works to expound his particular philosophy about reality and knowledge. The first work put forth the theory: there is nothing. The second work went on to further: even if there is something, you can’t know it. His third and crowning work expounded the notion: even if you can know something, you can’t communicate it to another person.

I hope you are laughing out loud at that dear Reader! When the ancient Greek philosophers made mistakes, they did it with an honest gusto that makes their works worth preserving for millennia.

We take many things for granted! The existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will, for example, can be proven by reason alone. Try it some time! It isn’t easy. We take these truths for granted because not only have others thought them through for us, but God’s Revelation through His Church has given us a Divine clarity on the subjects found in Theodicy (things of the Faith that can be known by reason alone). Studying philosopha perennis (the “handmaid of theology”) is not only a good way to prepare our minds for the study of theology, but is a very good exercise to build up gratitude for the Faith.

Now, I would like to contrast the innocent foolishness of the ancient Greek philosophers as they ardently groped for truth, with the very culpable and blasphemous foolishness of modern theologians as they ungratefully eschew the Truths of the Faith for the darkness of their own errors. This is not so amusing.

Modern “Gorgias” theologians write books that should be authored by God alone. Yes, “Things Known Only To God” is a subject that many modern theologians have dared to write about. As with Gorgias (but not so innocently) their contradiction is sometimes in the very title of their work.

Unlike our sympathy for the ancient Greek philosophers when they stray in their pursuit of truth, we should be absolutely outraged at the flagrant denial of Truth many modern theologians substitute for the Divine and Catholic Faith. Unworthy of the title “theologian,” their blasphemous theories that “get everyone into heaven” are merely an attempt to put their own name upon God’s Revelation.

There is little danger of anyone holding the errors of Gorgias! However, many people believe the errors of these modern theologians…resulting in innumerable souls being lost as the Revealed Faith is denied and the Sacraments disparaged.

Not amusing…. But, “God will laugh at them from Heaven”, as He says in Holy Scripture. The “denial of the known truth” is, according to Saint Augustine, one of the sins against the Holy Spirit which will not be forgiven in this world, or in the next.

Keep the Faith, whole and entire, dear Reader! Pray the Act of Faith out of gratitude. What would Gorgias have given to have the Divine grasp of Truth that we so often…take for granted!

Email Sister Marie Thérèse, at convent@catholicism.org
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“[But] Mike went still further. He began broadcasting explicitly Catholic material on the air, showing how Church teaching is intrinsically related to a just and moral resolution of political questions and that religion has everything to do with politics rightly understood. In short, there was nothing like the Mike Church Show in the entire history of American talk radio.

“And the results were astonishing: Mike was changing minds and hearts and making converts almost weekly. He began receiving one email after another from Protestants whose eyes had been opened by the truth he was presenting. They were joining the Catholic Church because of the Mike Church Show. I think you know what happened next. Four months ago, Mike received word from the Sirius Radio management that after thirteen years his show was being cancelled. The only reason given was “editorial decisions.” In other words: Mike had become too Catholic for Sirius Radio.

[And that is where you come in.]
“Mike knew what was coming when he began to speak the truth about God and His Church on the air, and so he prepared for the day when Sirius Radio would shut him down. Almost from the moment he heard the news, Mike was ready to launch the project I am personally asking you to support now: The Veritas Radio Network's CRUSADE Channel, featuring The Mike Church Show.” - Christopher Ferrara.

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I am writing this without doing reference work. These accounts are in my memory, having read many books on the saints, including Father Alvin Butler's *magnum opus*: short, but sometimes not so short, biographies for every saint for every day of the year. His work must have taken a lifetime.

Saint John Chrysostom takes the prize for Father Butler's longest entry: forty pages, two columns per page, and that's the old edition with the small print.

The brief accounts in this article will not be in chronological order.

I begin with Saint Francis Xavier.

**Tongues and then Some**

Called the greatest apostle after Saint Paul, Saint Francis Xavier baptized three hundred thousand pagan converts with his own hand. All together they estimate that he was responsible for converting some three million pagans in his ten years in the East. One miracle performed through his intercession, and related during his canonization process by an eyewitness, involved a lot of angels. You see, at times he was given the gift of tongues and at times he was not. With the Japanese, for instance, he was not given this gift. In fact, he had to rely on a Jesuit Brother who knew Japanese to do his talking. But with the Indians of Fishery coast he was often so gifted. On one occasion a huge crowd was present for some festivity from many parts of that huge country and the saint came to the festival and began to preach to them. He probably spoke in Hindi (Kokani) or Tamil because he had a basic knowledge of these languages. As he spoke, the people who had their own numerous dialects all understood him in their native tongue. *And that's not all!* People were fascinated with his message and they began shouting out varied questions. Saint Francis understood the questions and answered them all to their utter astonishment. *And that's not all!* As he answered one question the angels took over and did some tampering with the air waves. As he spoke, his voice waves gave multiple answers to multiple questions simultaneously. Such was the testimony by eyewitnesses, or I should say, earwitnesses.

**The Pious Crab**

Then there's the story of the crab. This was witnessed by many as well and it was accepted as a miracle at the canonization process. On a voyage at sea, somewhere in the south Pacific, a ferocious storm threatened the lives of all on board. The saint tossed his crucifix into the raging waters and prayed for calm and the wind stopped and the waves subsided. Sadly, though, the great missioner lost his crucifix. Or, so he thought. As he and some of the sailors were walking along the beach some time shortly afterwards, a crab greeted them holding the crucifix in its claws.

**Jumping Over a Wall**

Saint John of the Cross, doctor of the Church, and reformer of the Carmelites, was once imprisoned for nine months by his own Order's friars who objected to some of the reform work of the saint. But they were not really bad men at all. Issues of obedience had led to the confusion, putting the reformers against the moderates, and bishops supporting both sides. By divine inspiration, Saint John decided that he should make an escape. The plans required sowing sheets together and climbing out a small window and loosening screws on a padlock.

Yes, those were the days when religious men did rather strange things to each other! (I won’t get distracted here with the story of how Saint Francis de Sales had to bring peace to a troubled Augustinian monastery where some of the monks had actually planned to poison a superior whom they considered too strict). Well, Friar John made it to the ground from his cell, but there was a problem he had not considered. The wall! The monastery was enclosed by a twelve foot wall with a locked gate. What did the saint do? He jumped over the wall. “For by thee I shall be delivered from temptation; and through my God I shall go over a wall” (Psalm 17:30).

**We Shall Have Duck**

Saint Teresa of Avila, her Carmelite co-reformer, had more support. No miracle to report here. But was she ever a character! She actually had the gumption to complain to Our Lord about the way He was treating her. She said to God: “If this is the way you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few.” On a certain feast day (probably her favorite, Saint Joseph) Saint Teresa told the cook to prepare duck for dinner. I cannot remember what feast day it was, but it was not Easter. And having duck was contrary to their habitual life of abstinence. The obedient sister in the kitchen served the delicacy. Some of the sisters looked mortified. The saint could see their expressions and, reading their thoughts, she boldly proclaimed: “My sisters, today is a great feast day, and on this feast day, we shall henceforth eat duck.” She may have even let her fist pound the table as she accented each word.

**The Comical Saint**

Then, there is always Saint Philip Neri if you want a saint who knew how to lighten things up. He is another one who fills a lot of Father Butler’s pages. One thing Saint Philip did not like was being revered as a saint. Not much he could do.
about that as everyone in Rome, where he lived, knew he was a saint. His heart beat so powerfully when he was attending Mass that the walls of the church would vibrate. And his own Mass went on for hours because he almost always fell into an ecstasy during consecration. Saint Philip preferred to be looked upon as a fool. Sometimes he would shave half his beard off and go out that way in public. He also had another trick he would use when some curious theologians would come to Rome to “check him out.” For such occasions he kept a comic book in his desk drawer. When two Dutch theologians arrived one day at his quarters for a visit, the saint, knowing that they were coming, pulled out the comic book, and began laughing loudly in his chair as they knocked at his door. “Come in, come in,” he said with a chuckle. They came in, made sure it was Father Neri, and they quickly left. “Nothing to see here, let’s move along.”

The Gruff Saint

Saint Padre Pio was known to be occasionally gruff. One time a pious man (I think he was a priest) came to San Giovanni Rotondo hoping to speak to the stigmatist alone while he was staying a few days at the monastery. Finding an opportunity to do so, he approached the saint in the cloister garden. Padre Pio brushed him off saying: “Can’t you see I am busy!”

The poor man, or priest, was terribly hurt and humbly walked away. Sometime later, the holy friar saw him and came up to him apologizing. “Father,” he said, “I am sorry, when you came to me earlier, I was busy receiving many prayer requests from the guardian angels of my children.”

One of the items in the reliquary for Padre Pio at the monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo is a partially melted thermometer. A doctor had used it to take the saint’s temperature when the stigmatist was a young and very sickly priest. It read 114 degrees before starting to melt — and that was as high as the thermometer went.

Pages could be filled with similar stories about Padre Pio.

Congratulations on Your Wounds

World renowned heart specialist, Doctor Paul Dudley White, was converted to the Catholic Faith by Father Feeney. Father used to stop by his home every day in Harvard, Massachusetts, toot the horn, and the doctor, still Episcopalian, would come out and check Father’s pulse while they recited a Hail Mary. Years before this, Doctor White was involved in raising funds for Padre Pio’s Hospital for the Suffering. The doctor was there, in San Giovanni Rotondo, when Padre Pio offered an outdoor Mass in front of the hospital for its opening day. Greeting Padre Pio, the good doctor, was totally clueless what to say to a stigmatist saint. You won’t believe what the tongue-tied doctor said! “Congratulations on your wounds.” That’s the truth. I am trying to picture Padre Pio’s expression upon hearing this. I cannot.

No Salvation Outside the Church

This following story is not for the sentimental. It is hard. Very few, even among traditional Catholics, could handle it. I know they can’t. They have written so and told me so. Without my Faith in the defined dogma, no salvation outside the Church, in its literal sense, I would find what follows unacceptable. That’s because, on my own, without Faith, I would be a sentimentalist, especially regarding Bible-believing Protestants who were not publicly anti-Catholic. In fact, before I came to Saint Benedict Center, my view on the salvation issue was 180 degrees opposite of the Church’s teaching. Of course I did not know during those young years of my life what the Church’s teaching was on the state of soul of sincere non-Catholics.

Having accepted the Church’s teaching, all I can do is try to first save my own soul and do my best to at least pray for wayward Catholics and my non-Catholic acquaintances and friends. Well, here is the story. It can be found in the writings of Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori. It is, I believe, in The Glories of Mary. If not, then it is in the Preparation for Death.

A young Redemptorist priest in the saint’s community had a conscience problem that he kept to himself. The priest was a Protestant convert. He had always prayed as a Catholic for the salvation of his mother who, as far as he knew, died outside the Church. Of course, this is good, because one can always have hope that a baptized non-Catholic made amends with God by renouncing his heresy before death. Notice I said “heresy.” (By the way, as I am sure you know, all children validly baptized, no matter by whom, are baptized Catholic and are members of the Church). The thinking, even among many traditional Catholics, is that someone who was born into a Protestant family and so raised is not guilty of heresy when they come of age because they never really knew the Catholic truth. Their opinion is that such a Protestant, even though they formally reject Catholic truth, is still not a heretic, because they “sincerely” do not know any better. They are in “good faith.” They were taught that way by their parents. Praying for his mother one day this young Redemptorist priest had a terribly frightening visit from her. She told him to stop praying for her because “she died a heretic and was damned.”

This is why Saint Peter Julian Eymard wrote that “it is better to be a bad Catholic than a good Protestant.” A bad Catholic, he said, “was still a member of the family and can more easily come home like the prodigal son.” Tough lessons, to be sure.

Email Brian Kelly at bdk@catholicism.org
This book of nearly five hundred pages is the perfect solution for so many Catholics anxious to get reacquainted with the lives of the more popularly known saints, but who have too little time to read more thorough biographies. Although the composite sketches are written as simple summaries, children are going to need their parents help in identifying titles, locales and other related history. There are approximately five hundred entries covering the feast days for each day of the year with an accompanying pictorial sketch of the saint being honored. The historical information is taken from the original work of the great hagiographer, Father Alban Butler, as well as from a few other sources. Meditations are also provided for the major moveable feasts. A convenient index for ready reference completes this most excellent pious work. If you are looking for a more abridged version of the original Butler’s Lives of the Saints, you have it here. Preserving Christian Publications has done a much needed service in republishing these handy pictorial hagiographies. Excellent for family reading at dinner or after the Rosary. What better way to incite young and old to imitate the saints than by giving them a less compendious and easily read production through which to whet their appetite with holy desires!

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A CHILD IS BORN

O
n the event of the recent birth of my tenth grandchild, a boy, the birth of other children come to mind, e.g., the Birth of Our Lord, Our Lady (September 8), and, right after Christmas, the Feast of the Holy Innocents (December 28). These last were born to be the first martyrs.

In these modern days, when a distinct darkness covers the earth, we may meditate on the beginning and end of our lives. I held my little grandson just before I began this article. Here he is, so tiny, so beautiful, so pure, so innocent, so vulnerable. Barely able to see, i.e., to focus his eyes, unable to do more than babble, uncertain of his surroundings, and yet, a little smile comes over his face. A little cherub, so to speak. A wonderful beginning, a light in the lives of his parents, siblings, relatives, and, of course, his grandparents.

God willing, he will grow up to be a strong manly man who loves God above all else. He will embrace the Holy One True Faith and offer himself, whole and entire, to the Most Holy Redeemer for the salvation of souls, those whom he knows and those whom he comes to know, but prays for.

We must recoil at the thought of so many of the little boys and girls of his generation who have already died and those about to be murdered. It is a shocking, but sobering, thought to recall how mankind has descended into an abyss of insanity, as we allow so many innocents to die at the hands of an ignorant, selfish, uncaring and crazed world. What an unnecessary, unjust and horrible end for those little ones.

My grandson was born on a special day, September 12, the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary. The birth of children has always been very important in my family. And it is no wonder. We happen to love children! Imagine the joy Joachim and Anne had when Mary was born.

My grandson received a gift that every child receives. I’m not talking about the gift of life, however, I am speaking about the most important first gift a child — any child — can ever receive. God so loves him, in fact every human creature He makes, He has, from the moment of his conception, granted him a gift so great it only existed in Heaven at the beginning of time.

This gift is not withheld from those who are not baptized. It is not taken away from the sinful. Each baby comes into this life naked and innocent — save for Original Sin. Each child needs loving parents although some do not receive such loving parents.

What they all receive is, in a sense, a gift that does not stop giving. God gives each baby a protector as this gift, a counselor, one who is at his side, a defender, a protector — someone straight from Heaven. One of His own people, one might say. That gift is his Guardian Angel.

Our Lord told the disciples, “See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 18:10).

What you may not know is that your Guardian Angel is with you every second of all the days of your life on earth. He assists as one enters Heaven, or consoles one in Purgatory. There is one place that he does not go. One place he cannot go. That one place is Hell.

Throughout one’s life your Guardian Angel is, “at your side, to light and guard to rule and guide.” For the damned, the Guardian’s job ceases. He can no longer help them as they have chosen to be against his Lord, his Boss.

For other than some obvious reasons, Guardian Angels are quite useful. For example, you can ask your Guardian Angel to speak with the Guardian Angel of someone you are trying to convert. You may ask him to soften the heart of that person, or to hear the ‘good news’ you bring, or to accept the Miraculous Medal you will offer, or another sacramental. You may ask to have his Guardian Angel encourage that soul to Confession, to Mass, to Communion.

Space does not allow us to fully treat of the historical events involving angels, the “ministering spirits” on earth, known from the Old and New Testaments. A reading of Tobias alone will show us the power angels have, the great help they can be to us — especially if we listen and follow their inspirations.

In Paradise, previous to their sin, our innocent parents were familiar with the good angels and, most likely, they were ministered to by them. Recall, too, that three avenging angels were sent to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Guardian Angels are not reserved for the ordinary man, but are assigned to nations also. The Church teaches us that each bishop is assigned two Guardian Angels. The Pope has three Guardian Angels.

Isn’t it amazing that we know we have a Guardian Angel, and yet many, if not most of us, never even speak to our Guardian Angel. It would be wise for us to speak to our Guardian Angel every day. I am not talking about just saying the lovely prayer to Our Guardian Angel, “Angel of God my guardian dear, to whom God’s love commits me here. Ever this this day/night be at my side, to light to guard to
rule and guide. Amen.” I am talking about consulting our Guardian Angels when faced with some question, doubt, fear, etc. How about asking your guardian, e.g., “My dear Guardian Angel please help me with this problem. You know how faithless I am, and without good will, and therefore I need your help. You have been assigned to me and I have been a very poor student. Please help me dear Guardian!”

Should we not make such angelic conversation every day with the heavenly being who has been assigned to us for the very purpose of getting us to Heaven? Why ignore one of God’s greatest gifts to us? Why indeed?


Email Brother John Marie Vianney, at toprefect@catholicism.org
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(Note: This was written on the occasion of the death of Brother Hugh, M.I.C.M., one of the founding members of our Order, who went to his reward on July 11, 1979. There is some minor editing. The piece introduced From the Housetops No. 18, which featured the life of Saint John Bosco. Brother Hugh was a real giant of a man who left a deep impression on many souls, and was an intrepid leader at Saint Benedict Center during very difficult times. Brother Francis loved him deeply, and has cherished his memory all these years. We thought it fitting, on the thirtieth anniversary of Brother Hugh’s death, to publish this small tribute on our web site. It is especially so inasmuch as its author is now very close to entering eternity himself, where, we hope, he will join his old confrere in beatitude. -July 11, 2009)

The great apostle of youth in modern times, Saint John Bosco, whose inspiring and most exciting story is the feature of this issue of our magazine, From the Housetops, may be styled “The Saint of Enthusiasm.” But as I present his story written by Brother John Neumann, M.I.C.M., Tert. it is my sad duty to announce to our readers the death of another apostle of enthusiasm, our Superior, Brother Hugh MacIsaac, M.I.C.M., whose last cherished project on earth was to plan this very issue.

Brother Hugh was our most effective leader in our apostolate to bring the message of the Faith to all our cities and towns throughout the United States. One wonders how many hundreds, or even thousands, were waiting to meet him on his departure from this vale of tears in the early morning of July 11th of this year — souls who might owe their eternal salvation to the loving and enthusiastic challenge given to them by Brother Hugh during his long apostate of over thirty years.

“When I go to heaven,” he said recently with his characteristic humor, “after I meet the Holy Family and my patron saint, I’ll ask to see Henry.” Henry was an industrial magnate in Chicago whom Brother Hugh met and sent back to the sacraments a few days before Henry went unexpectedly to meet his Creator.

Another person I am sure was there to welcome him is Professor Augusto Bersani, a leader of the Waldensians [also called the Waldenses]. Brother Hugh labored “with the patience of Job” for twenty-five long years before achieving the conversion of this brilliant man who somehow had wandered into the poisoned pastures of heresy. Professor Bersani finally sent for a priest on his deathbed, and made his peace with God.

I would like to bet that Brother Hugh holds the record for the number of miles on this great country’s highways and byways that he traveled on his own two feet, and also for the number of persons in all walks of life that he confronted with the message of salvation “eyeball to eyeball” (to use one of his favorite expressions) in, one might almost say, every city and town of the United States.

The Waldensian conversion forms another bond with the Italian apostle of enthusiasm, Don Bosco, the hero of this volume. For Saint John Bosco also labored for the souls of the Waldensians in northern Italy.

And another bond that may be mentioned here is Saint John Bosco’s famous concern for the English-speaking world, the United States in particular. We have always known that in aiming at the conversion of America, we could count on the patronage of Don Bosco; now he will be assisted by his humble devotee, Brother Hugh, a Slave of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

We have been referring to that shining virtue common to these two Catholic apostles under the name of “enthusiasm.” But, on the supernatural plane, that virtue should be called zeal.

The whole world has been talking about the fiery zeal of Saint John Bosco, and we feel confident that the world will one day be talking about the fiery zeal of our Brother Hugh.

And it is through such zeal, which we think will henceforth become infectious, that we hope to convert America.

“Who is the happiest man? He who loves God most!”

— Brother Hugh, M.I.C.M. •
At that time, England’s criminal investigation methods were far behind some of the countries on the Continent. France, in particular, was light years ahead in the methods that we now consider normal police investigative techniques: the use of fingerprints and other forensic evidence, the preservation and protection of the crime scene, the exclusion of the press and other curious spectators from the scene until evidence could be collected, etc. Doyle’s acceptance of the Rationalism of the era would give the world the hard-headed, fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, who emphasized reason and empirical evidence in the solution of imaginary crimes. Doyle invented Holmes, with his striking ability to make careful observations and, from the smallest details, reach correct inductions, in part, to urge English law enforcement to modernize its methods, to better protect the innocent and to bring the guilty to justice. This belief is what allowed him, at least in his younger years, to offer some practical and effective advice in several real criminal cases.

But, as Doyle approached middle age, he relied more on the messages of spiritualists than on forensic science. Although he had already begun to show interest in Spiritualism, it seems that the death of his son during the Great War provided the great impetus for Doyle to attempt to contact him through the use of seances, during which a seer would attempt to call up his spirit from the dead. Doyle’s public writings and lectures on the topic fostered an entire industry of seers, charlatans and purveyors of fairies.

Doyle was introduced to the famous magician, Harry Houdini and, soon, they became fast friends. But, it was not long before the two men disagreed on the validity of Spiritualism and the nature of seances. Sandford describes at length the great, public debate which developed between Houdini and Doyle. Houdini may have been a driven and creative illusionist, but he was honest about his “magic” being nothing more than legerdemain. When Houdini became aware of the frauds that were being perpetrated on Doyle by the seers and spiritualists, he repeatedly warned Doyle they were charlatans, performing parlor tricks and calling them communication with the dead. He tried to convince Doyle that he was being made into a fool, a laughing stock, not only in the world of real science, but also in the world of the illusionists.

Doyle would not be persuaded and even published articles vigorously defending the veracity of the frauds. He went so far as to claim that some of Houdini’s illusions, such as apparently walking through a wall, were actually not effects at all, but genuine paranormal events. He argued that Houdini himself did not realize his own spiritual powers! Though he tried to do so for many years, Houdini was never able to convince his friend that he was being fooled by obvious charlatans.

The topic of Fairies (yes, the tiny beings that look like people sporting the wings of birds and insects) was very close to Doyle’s heart. He traveled around the world displaying what were actually doctored photos that supposedly showed fairies, sometimes in the woods, sometimes by themselves,
sometimes playing with children. Even as a young boy, I was able to discern that the photos were doctored and did not show fairies any more than they showed space aliens. The photos were simply superimposed images taken at different times on the same piece of film. How was it that Doyle could not see through this obvious deception? Was Doyle’s nearly fanatical promotion of fairies the result of the blindness of the true believer?

In the last chapter of the book, Christopher Sandford proposes an answer to this question, the mystery that bothered me for so many years. How could Doyle, who masterfully presented a method of solving crime that was so reasonable, clear-minded, and empirical, also pursue spiritualism and travel around the world promoting fraudulent seances and the existence of fairies? The chapter is appropriately entitled “The Final Problem,” Sandford writes the following:

The pattern of Conan Doyle’s behaviour as a spiritualist missionary had been set by the way he had seen life as a teenaged schoolboy. Despite his own harsh family circumstances, he was a child who tried to find the essential goodness of the world, an optimist about people and nature, and yet one who railed against stupidity and prejudice wherever he found them. This specifically included his religious education. ‘Nothing can exceed the uncompromising bigotry of the Jesuit theology,’ Doyle wrote over fifty years later:

I remember that when, as a lad, I heard Father Murphy, a great fierce Irish priest, declare that there was sure damnation for everyone outside the Church, I looked upon him with horror, and to that moment I trace the first rift which has grown into such a chasm between me and those who were my guides.

So the final solution, which explains the strange contradictions in Doyle’s life, comes down to the denial of the dogma Extra ecclesiam nulla salus. Imagine that!

A quote from G. K. Chesterton seems to sum up Doyle’s problem succinctly: “You hard-shelled materialists were all balanced on the very edge of belief — of belief in almost anything.” Once Doyle had denied the dogma and aligned himself with the Rationalists, he could believe in anything — spiritualists, necromancy, table rapping, ether, dreams, fairies. Anything.

Anything...except God and His Church.

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A PRAYER FOR THE CONVERSION OF AMERICA
O Mary, Mother of mercy and Refuge of sinners, we beseech thee, be pleased to look with pitiful eyes upon poor heretics and schismatics. Thou who art the Seat of Wisdom, enlighten the minds that are miserably enfolded in the darkness of ignorance and sin, that they may clearly know that the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church is the one true Church of Jesus Christ, outside of which neither holiness nor salvation can be found. Finish the work of their conversion by obtaining for them the grace to accept all the truths of our Holy Faith, and to submit themselves to the supreme Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth; that so, being united with us in the sweet chains of divine charity, there may soon be only one fold under the same one shepherd; and may we all, O glorious Virgin, sing forever with exultation: Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, thou only hast destroyed all heresies in the whole world. Amen.

Hail Mary, three times (Pius IX, Raccolta No. 579).

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).

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