Our Lady of the Rosary as a Pilgrim
Joseph Sobran (1946-2010) was an American public intellectual and conservative thinker who spent more than twenty years of his life on the staff of National Review before being unceremoniously dumped from that esteemed publication. It seems he wandered too far off the reservation of its neocconservative editorial policy. Having been raised by fallen-way Catholics who neither baptized him nor taught him the religion, Joe was drawn to the Church at the tender age of fourteen and, resisting the pleas of one of his public school teachers who tried to talk him out of it, was baptized at fifteen.

It was my pleasure to meet Joe Sobran at a conference in the mid 1990s, and then to host him here at Saint Benedict Center in 2001, when he gave a talk at our annual conference: “How the Constitution Was Stolen”. After the conference, I sat with him at one of our picnic tables and found him in a very mellow mood, reciting from memory lengthy passages from Shakespeare in his sonorous baritone while drinking a cocktail of Tanqueray gin and Welsh’s white grape juice. It’s an encounter I won’t ever get out of my mind as long as I have one, nor can I forget what he drank; anyone who knows the teetotaling Protestant origins of Welsh’s Grape Juice — originally “Dr. Welch’s Unfermented Wine” — will see the poetic justice of putting gin in the stuff.

Sobran’s recitation had me truly spellbound, and I am not easily spellbound. (If the reader is wondering, the answer is: No, I wasn’t drinking.)

Joe Sobran beautifully plied the art of wordcraft, which he no doubt learned from the many and diverse authors whose works he devoured, including G.K. Chesterton and H.L. Mencken (he has been compared to both); P.G. Wodehouse, who he once called “my favorite writer”; and, of course, William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare! Or should we say the Earl of Oxford? Whether one agrees with Sobran’s opinion concerning the true identity of the Bard, there can be no gainsaying his knowledge of and love for Shakespeare’s work. In a satirical mood, he once penned an essay consisting mostly of Shakespeare’s words (probably all memorized: remember the Tanqueray and Welsh’s episode), inviting his audience to see if Shakespeare was as good a writer as he (Sobran) was. After arranging one hundred and three quotes from Shakespeare’s oeuvre into nine paragraphs, he concluded the essay, appropriately named, “You Be the Judge,” with an invitation to his readers to say who’s the better writer, Sobran or Shakespeare: “Well, there you have it. A fair sampling, I think. Please don’t judge him too harshly.”

Like Chesterton, Sobran was master of light satire and could playfully undertake a serious critique of someone else’s thought in a way that might make its adherent chuckle; for example: “Psychoanalysts tell us that humor is a form of aggression. My own view is that psychoanalysis is a form of aggression for humorless people.” The man truly had a light touch — and was right besides.

In order to introduce (or reintroduce) my readers to Sobran, I’ve chosen a handful of motifs found in his writings, letting the man speak for himself with illustrative excerpts. I begin with the theme, the hatred of Christ as an argument in favor of Christ. In the essay, “The Man They Still Hate,” our man gets to the point right at the start:

The world has long since forgiven Julius Caesar. Nobody today finds Socrates or Cicero irritating. Few of us resent Alexander the Great or his tutor, Aristotle.

No, only one man in the ancient world is still hated after two millennia: Jesus Christ.

This does not in itself prove the divinity of Christ, but it does show that his words and example haven’t dated. They still have an amazing power to provoke hatred as well as adoration. [Emphasis added throughout.]

One may profitably meditate on that last sentence. The rest of the essay gives reasons why people hate Christ, which, for Sobran, are reasons to love and adore Him. This motif, together with the next one, reminds me of Brother Francis’ frequent insistence that the Catholic Faith is and must remain a challenge to human nature. If Jesus Christ and His Church do not perpetually challenge fallen men to aim higher, then we’ve diluted the religion and have done no favors to mankind. For this reason, Brother called his little treasury of meditations, “The Challenge of Faith.”

Just as Our Lord is hated, so is the Church — which leads me to the next theme: hatred of the Church as an argument in her favor. In “The Catholic Position,” Sobran marvels over how, given her present weakness as a force for social change, the Church’s enemies simply cannot leave her alone:

You’d think that by now people who reject Catholicism would calmly ignore its teachings as old and irrelevant superstitions. After all, the Church has none of her old political power, adherence is now totally voluntary, and she has enough trouble getting her own children to listen to her.
But Catholicism still has a strange moral authority, and many people are unable to achieve a calm and assured disbelief. They are still driven to discredit the Church — perhaps for the same reason so many of us believe in her.

After praising the coherence of Catholic moral teaching, much of which used to be shared by mainstream Protestant denominations but has recently become a reason to hate the Church, he writes:

What had long been a consensus became censured as a “Catholic position.” We now see the same process well under way with abortion and homosexuality.

If cannibalism ever becomes popular, and the rest of the world, led by its progressive-minded intellectuals, decides that anthropophagy is a basic constitutional right, opposing cannibalism will become a “Catholic position” too. Catholics will once more be accused of wanting to “impose” their “views” on everyone else (even when they are far too weak to do so), and the reformers will cry, “Let’s keep government out of the kitchen!”

I don’t defend the Church’s morality because I am a Catholic. I became and remain a Catholic because the Church maintains a consistent morality — while the rest of the world keeps veering off into moral fads. My conviction that she is right is only strengthened by the world’s strident demand that she change along with it, as if it were a sort of moral duty to change one’s principles, like underwear, with reasonable frequency.

It is not only non-Catholics who demand that the Church change; that raucous chorus includes some of the Church’s own children. Most often, the changes insisted upon pertain to specific “pet vices — contraception, sodomy, same-sex marriage, and all the rest.” Sobran continues:

Notice that the proposed reforms usually have to do with sex. When the Church refuses to change, she is accused of being “obsessed” with sex, when it’s really her critics who are obsessed with it. Catholic morality recognizes seven deadly sins, of which lust is only one; but this happens to be the one the modern world can’t stop thinking about. Nobody demands that the Church “change its outdated teachings against sloth.”

At any rate, the Church can’t change. She can no more change her teaching about lust than her equally emphatic teachings about pride, gluttony, and sloth, because God has made the world as it is and no human will can repeal its moral order. These aren’t the Pope’s personal opinions; they are objective truths.

My penultimate Sobranian theme is the unassailable uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Noting that His detractors often contemptuously dismiss Christ as an unoriginal religious figure with an unexceptional doctrine, Sobran asserts Christ’s uniqueness (against Richard Dawkins, et al.) in “Happy Easter”:

Jesus was just like a lot of other religious leaders? Such as? Do other religions have prayers like the Our Father? Did the ancient Greeks ask Zeus to “forgive us as we forgive others”? Did the Aztecs pray like that? How many other religions command their votaries to rejoice, be of good cheer, have no fear? (“Trust in Poseidon”?)

And many other religious figures, we are told, have performed miracles every bit as impressive as those attributed to Jesus. Really? Did they cure blind men and cripples while assuring them that their sins were forgiven?

And did they, even after they had died (and risen again, it goes without saying), make converts who would die for what they had taught? Did any of them ever give a speech like the Sermon on the Mount? If so, where can I find a copy?

In “The Optional Jesus,” this theme of Our Lord’s unassailable uniqueness stands out in contrast to the fruitless efforts of modern scholars to distill “the Jesus of history” out of the “Christ of Faith”: 
Since the only documents we have attest a life of miraculous deeds, supernatural orientation, and eschatological purpose, the belief that a stripped-down “natural” life of Jesus can be reconstructed is totally at odds with the records.

But the futility of their task does not stop the enemies of religion from trying to recreate an uncreated Person to their own image and likeness, with unsurprising results:

We have found the historical Jesus, and he is us! He agrees with us, thinks like us, and votes like us. Best of all, he imposes no obligations on us… Since the historical Jesus is progressive almost by definition, anything in the Gospels that makes Jesus seem reactionary must have been interpolated by his reactionary followers. (The question then becomes why he attracted such a reactionary following, but never mind.) …

The historical Jesus is based on several modern dogmas: it presupposes that Jesus wasn’t divine, didn’t do miracles, didn’t foresee the Crucifixion, and didn’t rise from the dead. He just left a lot of wise sayings. Maybe he wasn’t divine, but he’s awfully quotable. And you can edit out the quotations you don’t like: they’re all optional.

This brings me to my final theme: the words of Christ as literary and moral “miracles.” Sobran thought them on a par with healing the blind and cripples, and raising people from the dead; like these corporeal miracles, His words reveal Our Lord’s unassailable uniqueness. Joe’s encounter with the Faith was very literary, given his deep appreciation of words, so he had a profound reverence for Our Lord’s sacred utterances, those verba Verbi — “words of the Word” — as they are sometimes called.

Addressing the aforementioned dismissal of Our Lord as one of many historical religious leaders, Sobran asks, in “Happy Easter,”

[D]id any of these impressive religious teachers, who seem to have been very numerous, match Jesus in what has been called his “command of the moment,” making memorable retorts, still quoted centuries later, to enemies trying to trap them with trick questions? Have any of their reported ad libis enduring as permanent moral teachings, like “Whoever among you is without sin, let him cast the first stone”?

Jesus is hated because of His unique and challenging words, words He never even bothered to write down, but which still “carried,” as Sobran argues in “The Man They Still Hate”:

To a writer’s eyes… the sheer power of Jesus’ sayings (which the poet Tennyson called “his greatest miracle”) are almost enough to prove his claim. Physical miracles might be feigned, but not these verbal miracles. Yet he apparently never wrote them down; he spoke them, often off the cuff, trusting them to “carry” by their inherent power.

Most writers are flattered if their words are remembered at all. But the spiritually demanding words of Jesus — which condemn even looking at a woman with lust — are still carried in the hearts of millions after 2000 years, even though we know them only in translations from translations. …

Even conveyed to us so indirectly, those words have “carried” like no others in all history, because so many people have found them true and compelling. The durability of those words is all the more striking when you consider that they are always out of fashion, as the secular world goes through its successive fads and crazes.

Methinks that last sentence is worthy of Chesterton, both in content and expression.

In my estimation, one of the tragedies of Joe Sobran’s career as an intellectual is that he was a conservative political thinker who was also a serious Catholic, rather than a serious Catholic political thinker. (That’s not a slight against conservatism, but an affirmation of what’s worth conserving.) This flaw is not a rarity in the Anglosphere, where Protestant and Enlightenment ideas have largely eclipsed traditional Catholic social thought. Had Sobran been steeped in the latter, as articulated by the popes and the great Continental political thinkers, he would perhaps have been spared identifying himself in later life as a libertarian (albeit of the “paleo” stripe). Had he done so, he probably would have been canned from National Review earlier, too.

But I love the man no less for this fault, and I owe a debt of gratitude to John Beaumont for reminding me what a treasure we have in the writings of the great Joe Sobran, which I highly recommend to my readers.

Rest in peace, Joe!

Email Brother André Marie at bam@catholicism.org
CONVENT CORNER

CAT PREPPER

Do you really think you are going to die, Dear Reader? Maybe you aren’t? Let’s face it, He-noch and Elias never died… although they are scheduled to return and die at the time of the Anti-Christ. But, perhaps you will be the first one to not die, ever? I actually met a medical man while I was doing missionary work, who assured me that science would advance to the point that he would not have to die when that time came. Hmm. He was in his 60’s and that was about 20 years ago… I wonder if he is still alive…

Well, Dear Reader, you might agree with me that it is a more sane outlook on life to realize that dangers to life abound and we should live prudently. I think that the persons most practiced at this are those I’ve heard called “Preppers”.

Yes, Preppers, as their name indicates, are “preparing” for life-threatening disasters that may come. They take great pains to stock up food, medical supplies, shelter materials and become proficient in many survival skills. They are so diligent that it is not likely that they will be caught unaware if a disaster does hit.

Some months ago, I received an e-newsletter which explained how to prepare your pet for one of those deadly emergencies. I have to say, I was interested since I would have a hard time surviving and realizing that I had not made provision for my faithful dog or cat. Yes, I have a heart!

So, I got to thinking about Prepping. And, I remembered a little story. According to this story, there was a man who took great pains to build and stock an underground shelter with loads of canned goods, water, and all that he would need to survive. One fateful day, that disaster hit and our Prepper fled to his shelter, locking the doors behind him. He turned on his flashlight and settled back in an easy chair, actually enjoying the muffled sounds of bombs dropping overhead. Looking over his accumulated hard work he was feeling totally satisfied and rather triumphant. He was safe! After enjoying a little reading, he decided to have some lunch while the trembling and shaking from the bombs continued. My what an appetite he had worked up! And, what a choice he had stored up for himself? Will it be raviolis or pork and beans? Or, how about chicken stew? So hard to choose! Finally, he settled on a tasty beef minestrone soup with crackers on the side. Being in a disaster can actually be very comfortable, he thought out loud…if you have been smart enough to prepare!

Email Sister Marie Thérèse, at convent@catholicism.org

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RECONQUEST

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Brother André Marie’s radio show is on the Veritas Radio Network’s “Crusade Channel.” Each weekly one-hour episode airs on Wednesday night at 8:00 PM Eastern (7:00 PM Central) and is then rebroadcast on Friday at 7:00 PM Eastern (6:00 PM Central), and again on the following Monday at 3:00 PM Eastern (2:00 PM Central) and 7:00 PM Eastern (6:00 PM Central)

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Read Chris Ferrara’s entire essay on Mike’s story “The Only True Voice In ‘Conservative’ Talk Radio Has Been Silenced. Here is what we Catholics can do about it.” at: mikechurch.com
I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done: in his justice which he hath wrought, he shall live

“Confidence”! The word comes from the two Latin words “con-fides,” with-faith. It is a filial trust in our Creator. So it is attached to the supernatural virtues of both faith and hope. Without holy confidence we lose faith in God’s justice; we imagine His mercy trumps His justice. Or, we lose hope in His mercy and despair. A person who despairs is someone who hates his sin more than he loves God. Remember, then, that the two sins against hope are presumption and despair.

Do not be disheartened if you have fallen from Grace. The quote above is a warning, not a sentence. As Saint Thomas says (and the Church teaches) all mortal sins can be forgiven by penance even those of a just man who has fallen. But this sacrament is not the subject of my present essay. Rather my subject is this idea of God “forgetting” my sins.
Too, there is Isaias: “I am he that blot out thy iniquities for my own sake, and I will not remember thy sins” (43:25).

With this confidence we find Tobias imploring God: “And now, O Lord, think of me, and take not revenge of my sins, neither remember my offenses, nor those of my parents. For we have not obeyed thy commandments, therefore are we delivered to spoil and to captivity, and death, and are made a fable, and a reproach to all nations, amongst which thou hast scattered us” (3:3-4 my bold).

Now We Need an Explanation

To be sure, God as God does not “forget” or “remember.” He is the eternal Now. In God there is no yesterday and tomorrow, no before or after. These are terms that apply to the inner human sense of memory, which is a power of the soul. Scripture often uses anthropomorphic terms in speaking of the divine attributes. The strength of God is His arm, etc. Or, regarding the passion of anger, God says to Noe: “I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, from man even to beasts, from the creeping thing even to the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them” (Genesis 6:7). God, as God, has no passions, no anger; He is immutable and does not repent as in “changing” His mind.

By “forgetting,” God intends for us to know that He will no longer hold us accountable for our sins if we turn totally to Him and do penance. Rather, in the Eternal Now, He sees our good deeds which His grace has drawn out of us. These works of grace have filled up the emptiness of our sins and replaced them with a “positive” — for sin is, in essence, the absence of good, the absence of what ought to be in justice. Thus, Saint Thomas taught that original sin is the absence of that sanctifying grace which God intended for all men at conception before the Fall.

God Cannot Be Outdone, He Will Bring Good Out of Evil

The word of God also assures us that God can bring good out of evil and in so doing one can say that He “forgets” the evil (the absence of the good that ought to have been) with the presence of the grace of virtuous deeds, thus transforming vice into virtue. “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” (Isaia 1:18).

This is why the Church sings the Felix Culpa in the Exultet at the Easter Vigil: “O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!”

Similarly in the Psalms God says through David: “Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow” (50:9).

O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

On this theme we have a petition prayer in the Maronite liturgy. It is from the Anaphora of Saint Sixtus, just after the Our Father and shortly before the “Invocation to Holy Communion.” It reads:

O Lord, hasten to transform all that is harmful and detrimental into that which will help and benefit us, that we may raise glory to you, now and for ever.

It is this truth in its highest sense that Saint Paul teaches in his epistle to the Romans, “And we know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good” (c. 8, vs 38).

Email Brian Kelly at bdk@catholicism.org
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PREFECT’S COLUMN
WHAT TO DO IN THE CURRENT CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Unless you have cut yourself off from the media (TV, radio, internet, etc.), you have been affected by the current coronavirus crisis. It is, in some respects, unprecedented, since our country has seen nothing like this in modern times. The most critical spiritual action we suffer from is that we have no public Mass. You may wish to read Brother Andre Marie’s article on our website “We have a crisis: no public Mass.”

Calm, Cool and Collected

At Fatima, Our Lady gave a prescription: do your daily duty; pray and sacrifice. If you have a daily schedule that admits prayer and meditation, I strongly suggest you begin each day with these two. You may take as little as fifteen or twenty minutes. My own habit may not fit your day. I try to get up at least an hour before I perform my daily duties. I begin with prayers before the Holy Face of Jesus, as depicted on the Shroud of Turin, reading books on the saints (I use various sources, e.g., missals, Butler’s (abridged and unabridged), Saints to Remember, or The Liturgical Year. Then I do a short meditation. This helps me to do what every good Catholic should want to do: God’s Holy Will, not my will.

Then offer your whole day to God. “All that we do without offering it to God is wasted.” —Saint Jean Marie Vianney.

Since we are the Church Militant we must act like the soldiers of Christ that we were confirmed to be. This also means we should be calm. “As our stout staff supports the trembling limbs of a feeble old man, so does faith sustain our vacillating mind, lest it be tossed about by sinful hesitation and perplexity.” -From Butler’s, Reflection on Saint Cyril.

Make a resolution to brave these storms valiantly, asking God to stand by you and Our Lady to guide you so that you do only God’s Holy Will. What would you do in any crisis – whether it affects only you personally, or the whole world? You keep your wits about you. You do not let the maddening crowd sway you. If you have already done so, continue your daily conversation with your Guardian Angel.

When it seems all is lost, do not lose hope. If you fall into depression or discouragement, remember it is caused by pride. Hold your head up! Be happy and gracious in the midst of this. Do not sit and wait for worse things. If they happen, you can not stop them. If they do not happen, you have wasted your time and energy on ruminating over mere possibilities.

And if you are beset by worries about these matters, do as a wise priest reminded me: – rinse and repeat, i.e., recall it is pride that causes that angst. A devotion that should be repeated by all Catholics is the daily Holy Rosary. In fact, it is a promise all members of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary make – first, second and third order. Pray the Rosary asking for a solution to whatever problem you face. You will always get an answer.

Saint Padre Pio of Pietrelcina said, “It is necessary to be strong, in order to become great; that is our duty. Life is a struggle, which we cannot avoid. We must triumph!”

Have Recourse to the Church

Even in times when the churches are closed for Mass, we can still have access to Church teaching, counsel, etc. We must remind ourselves, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against her.” After all, we are the Church Militant.

Saint Padre Pio’s counsel was simple; “Always remain close to the Catholic Church, because it alone can give you true peace, since it alone possesses Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the true Prince of Peace.” Saint Padre Pio pray for us, especially now at this hour of trial.

What do we miss in not having the Mass? Those who are or were daily communicants can attest to what is missed. At the hour of your death, the holy Masses you have heard devoutly will be your greatest consolation. With every Mass God forgives all your venial sins which you are determined to avoid and all your unknown sins which you never confessed. The power of Satan is diminished. Every Mass goes with you to Judgment.

What is the Weight of a Mass: A Tale of Faith by Josephine Nobisso addresses the question. Briefly, “a poor devout widow begs for a scrap of bread from a rich faithless baker, she promises to participate in the king’s wedding Mass as payment for the baker’s generosity. The baker writes ‘One Mass’ on a scrap of paper and places it on his scale to determine how much bread it is worth. To his and the entire town’s surprise, nothing in the shop, not even the gigantic wedding cakes made for the king, outweighs the simple piece of paper representing the true worth of a Mass.”

After the Mass and the sacraments we have our Mother. As it has been repeated over the centuries, “We can never say enough of Mary.” She is God’s most perfect creature.

If you were not a daily communicant before, though you could easily have been, and are now deprived of the Mass, you may prize the great gift of the Mass much more. “Neglect of duty is the first sign of self-love which ends with the loss of grace.” Butler’s, Reflection on St. Richard of Chichester.
Why not read the Scriptures daily? Especially now when we cannot go to our jobs. Under pain of death, Emperor Diocletian, in 303, issued an edict forbidding any person from keeping the holy scriptures. Saints Agape, Chionia and Irene, sisters, and their companions hid the scriptures. In the examination of Irene she was asked where they hid the scriptures which they read. She responded, “They were hid at our own house, and we durst not produce them; and we were in great trouble, because we could not read them night and day as we were accustomed to do.” -From Butler’s Reflections, Saints Agape, Chionia and Irene. (Bold added)

Suffer in Imitation of Christ

To a large degree, albeit not completely in this case, we are being inconvenienced when compared to the suffering of the martyrs. “If it seems to you that you have not yet suffered any tribulations, rest assured that you have not yet begun to be a true servant of God, because the Apostle clearly states that all those who wish to live piously in Christ will suffer persecutions. — Saint Augustine” – Taken from the Spiritual Diary.

Every day, remind yourself of Our Lord’s warning: “He who does not take up his cross and follow Me, is not worthy of Me” (Saint Matthew: 10:38).

As our editor, Brian Kelly, wrote in his article So Many Martyrs: “The Church was born out of blood and persecution. As the traditional saying credited to Tertullian went: ‘The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians.’ All of the Apostles were martyrs … All of the saints named in the canon of the Mass were martyrs, except for Our Lady, whose unique, unbloody martyrdom was like a sword piercing her soul. The first thirty-three popes were martyrs. It was revealed to Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori that in the first three centuries of persecution, from the Edict of Nero (which began the persecutions) in the year 66 to the Edict of Milan (which ended them) in 313 eleven million of the faithful were martyred for their Faith in Christ. Finally, in the last days, during the reign of antichrist, the faithful will endure the worst of all persecutions, and martyrs will usher in the final triumph of the Church, which will precede the end of the world.” (catholicism.org)

Saint Theresa of Avila wrote, “Since the Son of God obtained our salvation through suffering, He willed to teach us that there is nothing more fitting than suffering to give glory to God and to sanctify our souls. Yes, suffering for the love of God is the right road. Let us suffer as much as we can, for we will be that much more fortunate. For he who is not determined to follow this road will never make much progress” – From the Spiritual Diary.

Now, with these thoughts in mind, do what is truly needed: Why not make a decision to become a saint! Do it! You can only succeed if you try.

Little children, when they are hurt or afraid, run to their mothers. Is it not right to run to your Mother now? • Email Brother John Marie Vianney, at toprefect@catholicism.org

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GUEST COLUMN
WEATHERING THE SCOURGE

"If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs...". In these memorable lines by Kipling is found one of the challenges each of us has had to face in dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic. It seems that sometimes, when one least expects it, things seem to go haywire and our world seems to spin out of control — wars, terror attacks, crises on a more personal level or, as has now happened, a plague which apparently threatens death and at least economic destruction worldwide.

Yet despite this, we must each continue to live our life one day at a time. Hopefully, by the time this article is published, this pestilence will be merely a memory, but we cannot be certain of that. In the meantime, hopefully, lessons are learned, both at the national and at the personal level.

In the meantime, as always, we all have a state in life and duties appurtenant thereto: earning a living, caring for others, whatever it might be. Yet when one is told by the government, or his employer, to just go home and "shelter in place", don't work, and try to avoid getting sick, how is an individual to do this without his world collapsing, perhaps in illness, perhaps financially or worse, both?

We are told in Scripture to "walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7) but can this really be done? And if we do walk by faith, will it work? Well, no one can live without encountering obstacles, and no one lives forever, but we who are members of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (First, Second or Third Order) along with anyone else who has made his consecration to Our Lady, or at the very least recites the Rosary regularly, can rely on certain promises.

And what all this boils down to is walking by faith and depending upon God to take care of us. In order to reassure us that we are taken care of, our Heavenly Father has provided us with, among other comforts, a specific Psalm which keeps us covered during the times which we face now. It is Psalm 90 and it goes like this in relevant part, verses 1-12.

1. He that dwelleth in the aid of the most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob.

2. He shall say to the Lord, Thou art my protector and my refuge: My God, in him will I trust.

3. For He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters: and from the sharp word. (my emphasis)

4. He will overshadow thee with His shoulders: and under his wings thou shalt trust.

5. His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night.

6. Of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark: of invasion, or of the noonday devil. (my emphasis)

7. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee.

8. But thou shalt consider with thy eyes: and shalt see the reward of the wicked.

9. Because Thou, O Lord, art my hope: thou has made the Most High thy refuge.

10. There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling. (my emphasis).

11. For he hath given His angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways.

12. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Of course, there are a couple of things to note in particular about this psalm which contains such wonderful promises, which are particularly relevant in our time: first, that it is only directed towards certain people: those who "dwelleth in the aid of the most High" (verse 1). Second, and for this we need to look outside the text, to Matthew 4:5-7, in which Satan tried to get Our Lord to jump off the pinnacle of the temple by quoting verse 11 to assure Him that the angels would rescue Him. Our Lord replied, "...Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God". In other words, presuming on God's providence can be a sin in itself; we still need to take reasonable precautions and not act in a foolhardy manner.

In A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (1951), page 465, the commentator Rev. T. E. Bird compares both the "sharp word" and "business" mentioned in the psalm to pestilence, and, in regard to the freedom from the "scourge" in verse 10 states, "An act of calm confidence in God. The soul that shelters under God's protection shall be shielded from all dangers — especially the plague..."

Yet if the promises of this psalm are only to those "who dwelleth in the aid of the most high", how does one get to that point? We look, for instance, at Abraham, our father in faith (Galatians 3:7), and we know the test to which he was put, when God told him to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:1-13), and we realize that our own faith is likely not that strong. Yet it needn't be, really; God can work with varying levels of faith; any of us can pray, as did the man who told Our Lord, "I do believe, Lord: help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23). Any of us can pray that prayer, can't we?
And once we are determined to walk in faith, Holy Mother Church has provided a wealth of helps for us to grow in the faith. For instance, many readers will know of the many promises of Our Lady when she gave the Rosary to St. Dominic; further, one need not be Catholic to pray the Rosary — it is entirely scriptural. But how about the next step. How about a Novena? Indeed, how about the powerful 54 day Rosary Novena?

Many people are not aware of this particular devotion, yet it has never once failed for me. Not once. It dates from 1884 in Italy when a young girl named Fortuna Agrelli, hopelessly ill with multiple incurable illnesses, saw an apparition of Our Lady, in which she was told to make three novenas of the Rosary in petition, and three in thanksgiving. The girl was restored to good health after doing so.

The way to make this novena is to start with the Joyful Mysteries on whatever day of the week you begin, then go to the Sorrowful, then the Glorious mysteries, and repeat this nine times for a particular petition, then after the twenty seven day period ends, repeat the process in thanksgiving — whether you see results or not; it is to be prayed in faith, as is all prayer.

If one looks on the internet, there are several examples of how to pray this, often with beautiful prayers to go along with it; and these are, of course, beneficial. But this can make the 54 day novena seem somewhat overwhelming; really, the essence of this devotion is the Rosary itself.

Most of us are familiar with the first recorded novena, it is just that most people don’t think of it in those terms. After Our Lord ascended into heaven, the apostles, accompanied by Our Lady and other disciples, went into the upper room and prayed for nine days. And then, Pentecost occurred. The word comes from the Latin word for the number nine “novem” and specifically from “noviens” or “nine times”, and this has been a custom in the Church for nearly two thousand years.

And what better way to learn to walk by faith and not by sight, so that one day the saying, “He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High” will apply to us, so that we may know, with assurance, that the scourge will not come near our dwelling.

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of an American adult does not pay his taxes, he is aware of the possible consequences: He may wind up paying fines or may even find himself in jail. If an American child fails to obey his parents, he is also familiar with the possible consequences: he could be given a punishment or even receive a spanking on the backside. At first glance, it seems there is no difference between the state imposing a punishment on one of its citizens and a parent punishing a child. Both are punishments; both are administered by an authority; both result in pain or discomfort for the recipient.

Upon further reflection and especially after completing Brother Francis’ Ethics course, we discover that there are differences between correctives administered by the state and those which are administered within the family, differences that are important, even essential. In order to understand these differences, we need to examine the family and the state as social units. As human beings, it is natural for us to be members of both and it is important that we understand a bit about them in order to determine why punishment in one is not the same as in the other.

“The family is the smallest unit of society. It is the closest to the individual. The purpose of the family is the communication of life, the protection of life and the cultivation of perfection. It requires the loving cooperation of all involved.

“While the family is essentially a community of love whose members have all things in common, the state is an order of justice whose members do not and should not have all things in common.”

Immediately we see that the state is much more limited in its scope than the family. It is essentially an “order of justice.” Love is not found in the definition of the state nor is mercy. To modern ears this sounds a little odd. Mercy is not part of the state? If we think about it, we realize that the attempt to make the state more merciful has led to countless abuses and a great deal of injustice. For example, in the attempt to be more merciful to criminals, the state has increased injustice towards innocent victims and their families. The “welfare mentality” and socialism are the result of this misguided attempt to make the state more merciful towards the less fortunate. Racial quotas and the promotion of the incompetent which result in injustice to other members of society are the result of an attempt to be merciful to those who have suffered from past discrimination. Injustice towards some of society’s members is always a result of these misguided efforts to be merciful.

The family must be a just society as well, but those who hold the authority in a family, the parents, also love their subjects — something that is impossible for any state. In fact, the family is essentially a society of love. “The basis of the family, the bond of its unity, is love, natural and supernatural, between man and woman, between parents and children, and between brothers and sisters.” The ideal state, the just state, provides the conditions for the families to flourish because the family is “the most natural and the most necessary of all societies.” In addition to justice, “the proper virtues of familial society are: Fidelity, charity, obedience, mutual help and mutual respect.” The family “provides a constant opportunity for practicing the works of mercy…”

The state aims at the common good by providing conditions and opportunities for peace, order, security, national defense, protection against crime, etc. These are all directly tied to the order of justice. It is not directly concerned with individual happiness but only with providing the conditions for it. Whereas, “the common good for the familial society is most intimately connected with the individual good of each member of the family. The happiness of one is the happiness of all.” In short, essentially, the state is an order of justice; the family is an order of love.

How does this difference impact the administration of punishment within each order? For the state, the only mechanism it has to enforce justice and ultimately to exercise its authority is coercion. Without the threat of punishment, somewhere down the road, the state becomes ineffective. Of course, the danger is that the use of force is dangerous and can lead to tyranny.

For the family, on the other hand, punishment is only one means of exercising the authority possessed by the parents and their designees. Kindness, promptings, discussions, orders, assignments, gradations of penalties, and the force of love itself are also available to the family. For those in authority to rely on punishment alone is to attempt to emulate the state. This is an error that can lead to unfortunate consequences for the children and may even negatively affect the fabric of the family itself. Not that punishment should be eschewed in a family. This is also an error and can lead to consequences as great as or greater than relying on punishment alone for guiding the children. As is the case in many things, the golden mean is the goal.

1 All quotations in this article are from Brother Francis’ Ethics lectures.
When children are very young and before the age of reason, their training is very similar to the training of domestic animals. Simple rewards and punishments accompanied by a great deal of affection help the children learn the rules and to understand that they are loved and cared about. However, as time goes on, punishment should lessen and love should be the guide; children should learn to want to obey because they love their parents and desire to please them and avoid offending them.

The goal of a good state is justice, which should coincide with Divine Justice. The goal of a good family is infinitely greater — the salvation of each of its members. The family is not only the miniature state, it is the miniature school, the miniature church, the training ground for future adults and a primary source of true love for the parents and children alike. The state is none of the latter.

Are there any exceptions to this difference between the state and the family? Are there any states which can more closely coincide with the purpose of the family — the salvation of every one of its members? Only one that identifies itself as Catholic, that operates according to Catholic religious and social principles, and that recognizes the authority of the Church as its superior in religious and moral matters can reach beyond the strict administration of justice.

In the case of the Catholic state, the overriding goal would be the same as that of the family: the salvation of each of its citizens. The administration of justice, including methods of coercion would be utilized with this end in view. Even if the Catholic state condemns a criminal to death, it would do so with the provision that he be given every opportunity for conversion and reconciliation with the Church before he receives his punishment.

Despite this distinction between the Catholic state and all others, the family and the state are essentially different. The family that overemphasizes coercion to the exclusion of love when raising its children will have great difficulty in achieving its purpose — the salvation of all its members. When the non-Catholic state attempts to achieve anything other than justice, it will become excessively intrusive, imposing at best a Welfare State, at worst a Socialistic or Communist tyranny. Most importantly, it will fail to provide the conditions that will allow the family to achieve its exalted and eternal purpose.

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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
- **Editor’s Note:** There was an error in the last Mancipia crediting Br. Lawrence, M.I.C.M., Tert. with the article *Prayer in Adversity* written by Br. Dismas Mary, M.I.C.M., Tert.

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