

MANCIPIA

THE REPORT OF THE CRUSADE OF SAINT BENEDICT CENTER



September/October 2023



The Martyrdom of St. Ursula, part of the Saint Ursula Shrine.



Br. André Marie,
M.I.C.M., Prior

PRIOR'S COLUMN

ON LEAVES AND MARTYRS AND THE GLORY OF GOD

leaves lends an accompanying olfactory sensation that has its own charm.

Taken along with the shortening of the days that rapidly accelerates this time of year, the total experience is pleasantly melancholy.

That mood is appropriate when we consider that the attraction of the New England fall comes from the loveliness of leaves slowly dying. Like the proverbial swan song, it is an aesthetic experience standing at the intersection of beauty and death. Eventually, the trees will be bare — all but the evergreens which do not change color — and the coming winter landscape will, at least among the leafless tress and shrubs, have the look of cold death. Then, the white snow that covers the ground and clings to roofs and branches will provide its own sort of wintry mystique.

On the feast of Saint Ursula and Companions, virgins and martyrs, while driving back to our campus from Holy Mass, I was struck by just how beautiful these leaves are. It dawned on me — I'm sure quite unoriginally — how much this leafy *Nunc dimittis* has to teach us. The words, *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors Sanctorum eius*, came to mind — “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Ps. 115:15). They are daily sung in the office of Prime, just after the chanting of the *Roman Martyrology* for the next day.

We were created, as was the entire universe, for God's glory. This is no mere “nice thought”; it is Catholic dogma (Vatican I, Session 3, Canon 5). Says the Apostle, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Our

death is included in that “whatever else [we] do,” and it, like the deaths of all the martyrs the Church celebrates, should glorify God. It should be precious in His sight.

God probably does not care an awful lot about leaves. Comparatively speaking, He cannot. These things have vestiges of His Majesty but are not in His image and likeness as are we men. Sparrows, being sentient beings, are further up the hierarchy of being from vegetative life, but even these remarkable creatures are not the center of God's concern on this earth. That said, as we are assured by Truth Himself, not one of these tiny birds falls to the ground without our Father knowing it. A *person* — a being who will live forever — is of much greater consequence in the divine scheme of things, which was exactly Our Lord's point in mentioning sparrows in Matthew 10.

The beauties of nature — of inanimate things, living things, and, yes, *dying* things — were made for God's glory and also for our contemplative instruction, which, if we use it rightly, will augment God's glory. We should be as beautiful, as precious, in death as are the autumn leaves — only more so. Each utterly unique leaf will decompose never to rise again, while other leaves will come to replace them in spring. This is but an image of something far greater that will happen in us, for we look ahead to the promise of a new springtime when we ourselves will rise again *in eodem corpore* — in the same body — and all will be bright and living again. Liturgically, green, the color of spring, is the color of hope.

Is it any wonder that what the *Roman Martyrology* calls, “the solemnity of solemnities and our Pasch,” always happens in spring? (Given the formula for determining Easter that we have received from the Council of Nicaea, Easter must always come after the vernal equinox.) Christ's Resurrection is the cause, the type, and the pledge of our own.

Meantime, we who are blessed to have autumn color where we live should avail ourselves of this gift of the divine Wisdom, which, in this last part of the Church's year, unites the testimony of nature to that of the Church's liturgy to direct our attention to the Last Things. ■

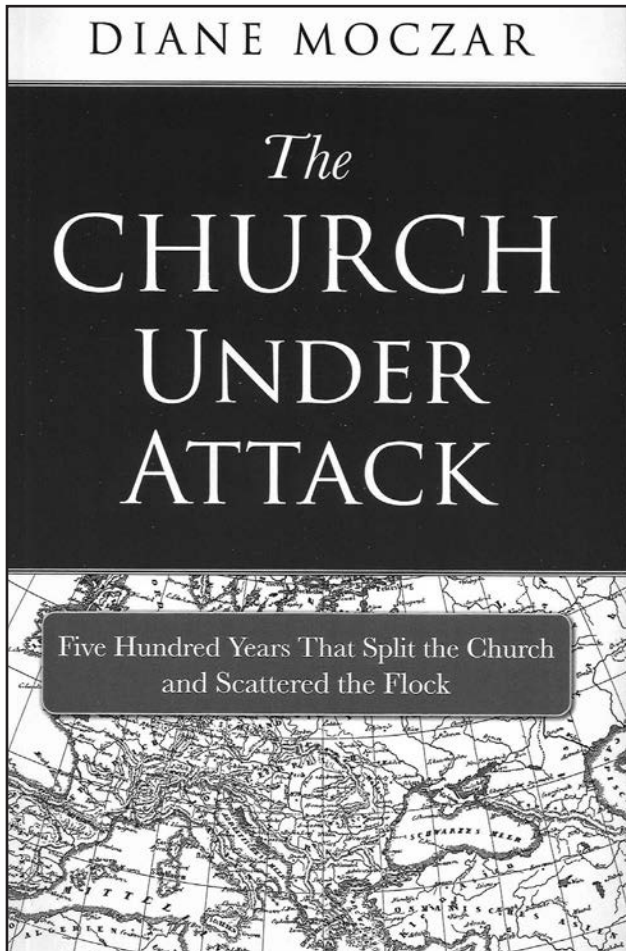
Email Brother André Marie at
bam@catholicism.org.



The Emperor Constantine and the bishops of the First Council of Nicaea

The Church Under Attack:

Five Hundred Years That Split The Church And Scattered The Flock



By Diane Moczar

Here's an unabashedly Catholic history that documents scores of sustained and unprecedented assaults on our Catholic Faith these past five centuries and delineates our Church's brave response to each one.

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Celebrated Catholic historian Diane Moczar counters here with an unflinching sketch of these five woeful centuries with sound reasons for hope. For, as she demonstrates, even after five hundred years of sustained persecution, our Church has not merely survived but continues in many places to flourish.

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Time after time, as Moczar shows, persecution has not snuffed out the Faith but has brought forth great saints whose holy deeds and brave examples frustrated their persecutors by communicating to the besieged Church a vigor greater than that of her persecutors.

These pages will renew your confidence that the Church is indeed Christ acting in the world and that no matter how strong or ruthless or vicious her opponents, she will not be vanquished but will endure to the end of time.
Softcover, 256 Pages

"Diane Moczar has written an excellent book. I enjoyed it thoroughly." — Pat Buchanan

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Sr. Marie Thérèse,
M.I.C.M.

CONVENT CORNER

HOURL GLASS

When I started teaching, I was given several games to support the curriculum and help the students master the material in each subject in a delightful way. Besides fun game pieces and boards, there were two elements that were part of the games the students enjoyed

most: points scored for correct answers, and a time limit. I discovered that a simple, boring drill could easily be turned into an exciting learning tool by simply keeping points on the chalkboard and adding a time limit. It was amazing how the interest and attention of the students was alerted by these basic elements! And, it was also astounding how much they easily learned and remembered by playing such games.

Dear Reader, have you ever experienced an hour glass? It is a contemplative experience to observe sand marking time as it trickles through a narrow glass “funnel” into a matching vessel below. Time has an end ... Time is marked almost imperceptibly by each grain of sand ... Time passes silently ... What is time for? ...

You may have used a miniature “hour glass” (an “egg timer”) to note the expiration of exactly three minutes to cook a perfect egg. Or, perhaps you have used another miniature “hour glass” during a game to mark the time limit on a turn in that game?

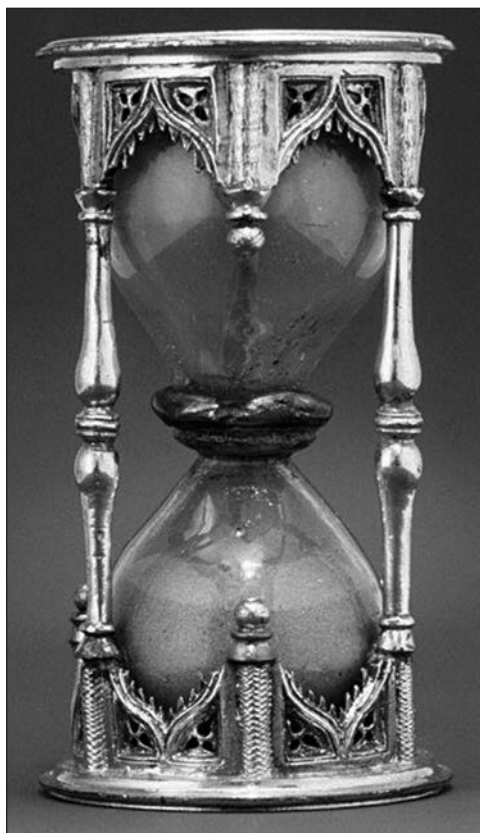
A game timer is, as I noted in my students, a powerful motivator to the mind as well as body (think of the timers in football and basketball that create such a frenzy, for example). The added experience of watching sand “running out” provides an extra emotional motivation to reach the goal!

Here, I want to share a darling and very powerful anecdote — related and helpful to this piece, but not exactly the same as the subject of my article. Many years ago, our students were praying the Rosary in front of the Blessed Sacrament. When they finished, one of the Second Grade boys had something important he wanted to share with the Sister who taught him. As she paused to listen to him, he held up his Rosary, a decade pinched tightly and stretched between the thumb

and forefinger of each hand. He looked intently at Sister and moved his pinched fingers very deliberately from bead to bead, pinching each one hard. He explained in tones of solemn delight that at each bead, he was crushing a demon. I am sure Our Blessed Mother was pleased with that prayer.

It can be very difficult at times to meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary because it is very difficult to control our thoughts, even when we have disciplined them for years. Like butterflies, our thoughts will sometimes flit from one subject to another throughout the decades. By the time we finish our Rosary, we might not be sure if we actually did meditate on the mysteries we were supposed to be praying. Perhaps, dear Reader, you have even been tempted to give up praying the Rosary because of this state of distraction? Or, at least you may have been tempted to conclude that you just can’t meditate on the mysteries as you pray the Rosary? Or worse, you may imagine that meditation on the mysteries during the Rosary is not too important?

Dear Reader, meditation on the mysteries is as important to the Rosary as the soul is to the body; at least, Saint Louis Marie de Montfort thought so. That being the case, we should make a sincere effort to meditate on each sacred mystery while we are praying the vocal prayers of the Rosary. Simply announcing the mystery is not meditating on it, though it could launch you into a meditation.



Pictures, quotes and other devices can facilitate meditation while praying the Rosary. Everyone is different, and each individual will have things that work now, but won’t in the future. The spiritual life is life, and, as such, it grows and develops.

The device I would like to present to you today, dear Reader, is a material one. Yes, the very beads that form each decade of your blessed Rosary in your pocket or purse can be an aid to meditation. How does this work? Aren’t they just for counting the Hail Marys?

At some point, years ago, I was praying my Rosary and feeling as though it was taking much longer than usual to get through all the mysteries. (I like to think my guardian angel had something to do with the little inspiration I am going to share with you!) I took my Rosary, held a decade between my hands very deliberately just like the little boy did, and just looked at it as

I continued to pray the Hail Mary's with the Community. I just kept looking at the beads in that decade disappearing as my fingers moved over them methodically to the prayers ...

Watching the beads disappearing to the prayers ... and my hands getting closer and closer ... I began realizing that I was limited to only ten Hail Marys during which to think about that mystery ... and the disappearing beads suddenly became a motivator I had never thought of before. There were only two left!!! I felt like someone on a game show, intensely trying to give as many correct answers as possible — before the clock runs out! Or, like a participant in a board game,

goaded on by the sand disappearing in a tiny “hour” glass. My mind was definitely alerted, and during the remainder of that Rosary, I meditated and grew a little in appreciation of Our Blessed Mother's Rosary beads!

Every once in a while since that moment of inspiration, I grasp my decade lovingly and utilize that method. Dear Reader, will you join me in utilizing the Rosary as a holy hour glass? ■

Email Sister Marie Thérèse at convent@catholicism.org

MY BEADS

By Father Abram Joseph Ryan (1838-1886), known as the “Poet-Priest of the Confederacy.” This poem strikes us as a fine complement to Sister Marie Thérèse's piece in this issue. The last stanza is very much in the spirit of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



Sweet, blessed beads! I would not part
With one of you for richest gem
That gleams in kingly diadem;
Ye know the history of my heart.

For I have told you every grief
In all the days of twenty years,
And I have moistened you with tears,
And in your decades found relief.

Ah! time has fled, and friends have failed
And joys have died; but in my needs
Ye were my friends, my blessed beads!
And ye consoled me when I wailed.

For many and many a time, in grief,
My weary fingers wandered round
Thy circled chain, and always found
In some Hail Mary sweet relief.

How many a story you might tell
Of inner life, to all unknown;
I trusted you and you alone,
But ah! ye keep my secrets well.

Ye are the only chain I wear —
A sign that I am but the slave,
In life, in death, beyond the grave,
Of Jesus and His Mother fair.



FOUNDER'S COLUMN

THE BIBLE WAS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH BY GOD IN ORDER TO MAKE US SAINTS

This piece is an excerpt from a lecture Brother Francis gave in the 1970s. — Editor

Brother Francis, M.I.C.M. The Bible is the book that makes saints. If you have absolutely no intention of ever trying to become a saint, then leave the Bible alone, for this is the only purpose of its existence.

Holy Scripture is the most ancient volume you have in your possession. If you doubt this, try to find one on your shelves written before the time of Moses. The Bible is also the most up-to-date best seller; and what is more, there never was a time when it was out-stripped in this regard. It is the most available book, being found in every language of the whole world. Moreover, it is the most read, the most quoted, the most used. Yet it happens, at the same time, to be most abused of all writings.

How, then, do we make proper use of the Bible? To begin with, the saints teach us by their lives and by their writings. For they themselves made the very best use of it, and thus became saints.

Holy Church also teaches us how to make of God's Book a means to sanctity and salvation. Indeed, it is principally for this purpose that Our Lord founded the Church. She teaches us by her use of Sacred Scripture in the liturgy of the Mass. She teaches us through the Divine Office (the Breviary), which priests and religious ought to read constantly, and ought to make the norm of what they hold and what they preach. And furthermore, the Church teaches us by means of many traditional prayers (the Rosary, the Angelus, the Way of the Cross, etc.), which bring vividly to our lives the Great Realities constituting the subject matter of Holy Writ.

But our best teacher in using and understanding Holy Scripture is the Bible itself. Let me explain what I mean.

You may have started to read the Old Testament and found it to be obscure, difficult, enigmatic, at times even shocking. The language of prophecy, to be sure, is necessarily enigmatic, for enigmas tease our minds, as it were, and rouse our powers of deep realization. They impress us with the mysterious and superrational quality of religious Truth. Yet the meaning of prophecies was never intended to remain perennially hidden. To our great fortune, we have the mysterious utterances of the Old Testament interpreted by Our Lord Himself, as

well as by His inspired Apostles and Evangelists. So let us go to the New Testament, where we are led with keys to the treasures of the Old.

At the direction of our great teacher and spiritual guide, Father Leonard Feeney, I made it a practice over a considerable period of time to copy, as part of a daily meditation, one passage a day from the New Testament where it was quoting directly from the Old. The number of these passages added up to 411. These can be easily found in any Bible, being prominently printed in italics in most editions.

The very first of my 411 copied passages is the following quotation from the Prophet Isaias, given by Saint Matthew to prove that the virginal birth of Jesus fulfills a Messianic prophecy:

Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call His name Emmanuel (Is. 7-14; Matt. 1:23).

Now if this were not a Messianic prophecy understood by the ancient Jews as such, there would have been absolutely no point in Matthew — a Jew himself — using it, since he wrote the first Gospel in the language of the Jews of his time precisely to show how the prophecies of the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus. But if we do not heed the right teachers — the Catholic Bible, the saints, and the Church — then the “scholars,” those liberal scribes of our time, will certainly mislead us. For this same breed of “scholars,” using Hebrew dictionaries written by Jews already committed to reject Jesus as the Messiah, and written centuries after Hebrew had ceased to be a spoken language, have convinced many, including some publishers of “Catholic” Bibles, that the word “alma” in the prophecy of Isaias does not mean “virgin” at all, but “a young girl.”

The matter brings to mind that notorious mistranslation in the English version of the Novus Ordo where *pro multis* (for many) is falsely given to mean “for all men.”

This, too, is rationalized by the “authority” of a modern scribe, who has devised the absurd and ridiculous lie that the Aramaic language spoken by Christ fails to provide distinct terms for the words “many” and “all”; while in the very same formula for the consecration of Our Lord's Precious Blood, the Aramaic word for “all” — namely, *kol* — is also used: “Take this, all of you, and drink from it” [Thank God, in 2007, this serious error in translation was corrected by the Holy See.]

But to return to the prophecy of Isaias, is it not remarkable that the Hebrew scholars — genuine scholars in this instance — who translated the Old Testament into Greek in

Holy Scripture is the most ancient volume you have in your possession. If you doubt this, try to find one on your shelves written before the time of Moses.

the third century before Our Lord, rendered “alma” by the Greek word “parthenos,” which can only mean “virgin”? This appears in the famous Greek version known as the Septuagint, which had such high authority that it was usually from it that Our Lord and His Apostles took their words, whenever they quoted Scripture. This Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament was done by seventy-two Hebrew scholars, who were learned theologians and pious believers in the Christ-to-come. And they were equally as

well versed in Greek as in their own Hebrew tongue, living in the Hellenistic world where Greek was the language for all educated people.

This is answering false scholars with true scholars. And it usually can be done — that is, by one who has the time and the learning to do it. But why should that ever be a necessity to a Catholic who has the Faith, who wants to become a saint, and who has for teachers the Apostles and Evangelists and even Our Lord Himself?

RECONQUEST

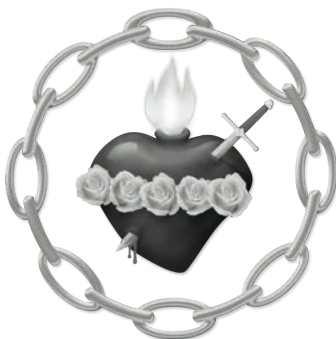
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2023 Saint Benedict Center Conference

Cultivating and Passing on a Catholic Worldview

Friday and Saturday, October 13 and 14

\$225 for both days with meals
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(Ladies: skirts or dresses please, no pants.)

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Twenty-sixth Annual Saint Benedict Center Conference

Cultivating and Passing on a Catholic Worldview

Friday, October 13

8:45 Breakfast

9:30 Registration opens

10:00 Brother André Marie's **Opening Remarks**

10:30 Sister Maria Philomena, M.I.C.M. — **Choosing Your Words Wisely: The Rhetoric of Passing on the Faith**

12:00 Angelus / Lunch

1:30 Hugh Owen — **The Dogma of Creation as Integral to a Catholic Worldview**

3:00 Br. André Marie, MICM — **'Virtue is the Order of Love': Charity as Informing the Catholic Worldview**

4:30 John Sharp — **'Neither to the Right Hand nor to the Left': Integral Catholicism in Confrontation with Modernity**

6:00 Dinner

Saturday, October 14

8:45 Breakfast

10:00 Charles Coulombe — **The Uses of Enchantment: Fantasy Literature and Folklore as Means of Instilling a Sacramental View of Life**

11:15 Mike Church — **Repossessing the Real Estate of the Catholic Mind**

12:30 The Order's group picture and reading of the Tertiary Necrology

12:30 Angelus / Lunch

2:00 Chris De Vos — **Sacred History as Vital to a Catholic Worldview: Lessons from Catholic Notables of the 19th Century**

4:00 Mr. C. Joseph Doyle — **Hilaire Belloc's Catholic Understanding of History**

After Doyle's talk: **Brothers and Sisters singing Polyphony**

6:00 Dinner

7:30 **Panel Discussion** (all speakers / moderated)



In the past few weeks, some very kind individual put all ten years' worth of *Triumph* magazine online. For many reasons, this is an incredible breakthrough. In the decade of its existence (1966-1976), *Triumph* put out excellent work from some of the finest Catholic writers of the day — Fritz Wilhelmsen, Thomas Molnar, Erik von Kuenhelt-Leddihn, John Wisner, James Fitzpatrick, Warren Carroll, Mel Bradford, our very own Gary Potter, and a host of others. Co-founded by L. Brent Bozell, brother-in-law of William F. Buckley, it was a product of Bozell's shift away from the views expressed in Buckley's *National Review*. Specifically, Bozell's distancing from Buckley's brand of Conservatism began with an editorial of Bill's called "Mater, si. Magistra, no!" This was a critique of John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, and in essence maintained the individual Catholic's right to dissent from Catholic Social Teaching. Nor was Buckley alone; there were other Catholics with similar problematic views on his board. Within a year, Bozell had resigned from the board, and began marshalling his forces, financial and human — the result was the appearance of *Triumph*.

Initially welcomed by Buckley and Co. as a "publication of the Church Militant," the relationship broke down completely as *Triumph*'s editors and writers sought to become ever more Catholic — regardless of where that might put them on the American political spectrum. At the beginning the new magazine and the Catholic element of *NR* shared a loathing of Communism and a suspicion of the liturgical changes of the post-Vatican II era. They split over the election of 1968, when Bozell and his cohort refused to support Nixon. In time — when *Roe v. Wade* made abortion "the law of the land" — *Triumph* maintained that "If she is to protect herself and she is to abide by her divine mandate to teach all peoples, the Catholic Church in America must break the articles of peace, she must forthrightly acknowledge that a state of war exists between herself and the American political order." For Buckley, this was only the latest bridge too far.

But the *Triumph* circle were only the latest group in either the Catholic or the Conservative milieu to discern what they saw as an unbridgeable gulf between Divine principles they treasured and the political order in which they dwelt and to which they believed — at least in the beginning — that they owed loyalty. Indeed, it is a quandary that goes back to the era before independence.

Unlike the French or Spanish colonies, which were settled by natives of countries to whose Catholic Monarchies they swore unquestioning obedience and from whose religious and political unity they did not dissent, the British brought the division in those very key topics from home when they arrived

— and this dates back to the apparent crypto-Catholics who arrived in the ostensibly all Anglican Jamestown colony back in 1607. The Wars of the Three Kingdoms that pitted Charles I against the Puritans and Presbyterians of his realm also featured the reduction of Virginia and Maryland by Cromwell's American followers — the very last battle of those wars was fought in Maryland at Severn Creek in 1652. So too with the so-called "Glorious Revolution" in 1688. Not only was James II overthrown in England, but his Dominion of New England was similarly dismantled in the colonies, and his Catholic governor of New York, Thomas Dongan, sent packing. It may be said that American Toryism went with him.

By the time the Revolution broke out in 1775, its Loyalist opponents — save for a few Jacobites and followers of Samuel Johnson — were forced to reply intellectually with arguments from the same Whig position that their opponents drew their ideology. Defeated, they either went to Canada and served as the foundation for that country's version of Anglo-Conservatism, or they remained and adjusted to the new regime.

The Catholics who came in afterwards — and particularly those who went into the Democratic Party — were for the most part simply happy to be in America, and gave little thought to either evangelising their new country, or critiquing its institutions. The successive opposition parties that arose — Federalist, Whig, and at length Republican — had no real problem with the liberal order, just with who was administering it.

The Second Civil War (1861-1865) did produce a Conservatism of sorts in the "Lost Cause" of the Confederacy. But this too saw itself as a more faithful following of the Founding Fathers — as evidenced by the Confederate National Seal depicting Washington on a horse — than upholders of transcendent principles which were not ever really applied in our country. Nevertheless, the spectacle of an entire way of life being overrun and a host of local polities destroyed or damaged gave the South a certain tragic vision of life and a love of the local not to be found elsewhere.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries did begin to see ethnic Catholics such as the organisers of the Catholic Central Verein of St. Louis, and newspapers such as the *Wandererblatt*, *Le Travailleur*, and *La Sentinelle* try to apply unvarnished Catholic Social Teaching to the contemporary American scene — but they were castigated as "foreign." Boston and New York in the 1890s saw Britain's Neo-Jacobite revival transplanted to these shores. But the unimpeachably American leader of the Order of the White Rose, Ralph Adams Cram, admitted that

there was no hope of Cavalier and Jacobite principles being carried out in the political life of the United States — the best they could do was to work for “Hamiltonian Principles” — themselves considered very radical. This era also saw the birth and rise of “Americanism” amongst the Catholic hierarchy.

America’s entry into World War I signalled the entrance of Catholicism into the national mainstream. After the war, the hierarchy issued “The Bishops’ Programme for Social Reconstruction,” authored by Msgr. John Ryan. It was certainly based upon the work of Leo XIII, but it did not go far — not least because of the economic boom of the Roaring ‘20s. The Depression saw the emergence of The Catholic Worker and Fr. John Coughlin’s National Union for Social Justice — at first allies and then foes of FDR’s New Deal, alongside such pure Capitalism concerned outfits as the American Liberty League who opposed its economic tyranny, and the so-called Old Right, spearheaded by the redoubtable John Flynn. Seward Collins’ American Review attempted to bring together Catholic Distributists, Monarchists, Southern Agrarians, and Corporatists of varying shades. But all of these groups failed to gain any real traction, and World War II had the same effect on voices of dissent that the First War had.

The postwar era saw the efforts of such as Russell Kirk and Buckley to create a new American intellectual Conservatism, which attracted many Catholics (although a handful of these went into such ventures as Integrity Magazine — which in many ways resembled the later Triumph — and the Movement associated with such figures as J.F. Powers). Addressing the problems Cram had wrestled with decades earlier, Kirk deemed 1688 and 1776 as essentially “Conservative Revolutions.” This reading certainly allowed one to be comfortable with the Founding Fathers, and to form an

alliance with the Libertarians. It was into this milieu that the founders of Triumph came, and against whose contradictions they revolted.

Triumph’s crew had their own set of internal contradictions. If a genuinely Conservative America was hard to envision, even more so was a genuinely Catholic one. Bozell and Wilhelmsen were Hispanicists (the former Francoist and the latter Carlist); Potter was a French Royalist; Bradford a Southern Agrarian; and so forth. As in earlier attempts we have looked at, this in the end was their Achilles Heel.

The “triumph” of National Review style Conservatism might well be said to have been Ronald Reagan’s election in 1980. But that apogee rapidly turned into its nadir, as post-1988 developments have shown the “Reagan Revolution” to have been a mere pause on the downward slope. In that sense, one might say National Review has been quite as much a failure — albeit longer-lived — as Triumph. But that would be a misreading.

The current disputes between “Integralism,” Post-Liberalism,” and that sort of thing show that the same issues are still with us. What is Conservatism, really? What is it, in this era, that we are trying to conserve — and how much of the liberal order that we have inherited is in itself responsible for where we are? What would a truly orthodox but really American Catholicism look like? In time, the Ordinariates may well help solve that question, but it is one whose answer is still far ahead of us. Ultimately, genuine, unreconstructed Catholicism shall be at the heart of any authentic American Catholicism — as it has been at the heart of all of the traditional European embodiments of the Faith.

But in the meantime, do yourself a favour. Go through the old issues of Triumph that are now so freely available. You will see some of the best minds that Catholic America (and some from elsewhere) ever produced. You’ll revisit old issues — some of which are as fresh as a Pharaoh’s Tomb, but others of which seem as though they address to-day’s issues. Many are inflammatory — and are meant to be. It was a feisty journal, and in the face of that hideous strength we oppose, all the more necessary for that.





Brother Dismas Mary, M.I.C.M.,
Tert.

SOME LIGHT SHINING THROUGH THE CLOUDS

As a resident of the State of California, arguably one of the most “progressive” and post-Christian states in the United States, I have something of a front row seat on the problems facing our culture today.

While no place is totally spared the horrors of modernity, California seems to be diving head first into it. Recently the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team made headlines by inviting a group called the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence to participate in a ceremony at Dodger Stadium. For those who are not familiar with the self named “Sisters,” some details may be in order. First the “Sisters” are actually male, not female. They are a self described community service group, supposedly working to further human rights, and they actually refer to their actions as a “vocation.” In reality they are nothing but men dressed up as imitation women in a way that can best be described as a creepy, perverted caricature. Further, their wearing of so-called “habits,” adoption of a parody of religious names, and their blatant mocking of Our Lord and Our Lady are openly sacrilegious and blasphemous, as well as obscene. One would have to search long and hard to find anything redeeming whatever in the antics of these ersatz “sisters.”

The situation played out, in relevant detail, basically as follows: During June of this year, in a month traditionally dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by Catholics around the world, the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team, in support of Satan’s alternative, “Pride Month,” decided that they would invite the above-described “Sisters” to Dodger Stadium and, before the start of the evening’s baseball game, to honor them with their “Community Hero” award. Further, whether by design or not, they scheduled this abomination to occur on June 16th, the Feast of the Sacred Heart. When a certain amount of negative reaction ensued, the Dodgers rescinded their invitation. Of course, after this brought outrage from the powerful Hollywood homosexual lobby and its allies, the Dodgers buckled under pressure and reinstated their invitation to the “Sisters.”

What they hadn’t counted on was that the word would get out, and that even in California there would be opposition to this exaltation of perversion and blasphemy. A number of well known Catholic activists organized a protest to be held at Dodger Stadium during the game, and several thousand people turned up to protest this despicable outrage. Additionally, the keynote speaker at the rally was Bishop Joseph Strickland of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas, who was introduced by organizer Jesse Romero with comments comparing

him to the leadership of the Mexican Cristero Movement of the 1920’s. The Bishop gave a stirring speech to the cheering crowd, stating that we need to be “audacious” in standing up for our faith.

The Dodgers, of course, persisted in their craven fawning over the “Sisters,” and proceeded to designate them as, “community heroes,” despite the presence of the Bishop and the crowds outside, and over the protests of some of their own team members. But, as this particular skirmish in the ongoing battle between the City of God and the City of Man played out in public, something else happened: the faithful were pleasantly surprised to find that they were supported in this endeavor by high ranking prelates, even some who, on the surface, had nothing to gain by speaking up. Most of these prelates could have excused themselves from speaking up based on the fact that the events in question happened outside their jurisdiction; they could have claimed to have no “dog in the fight,” or “skin in the game,” whichever metaphor you prefer. But, thankfully, they chose not to remain silent.

This comes as a relief at a time when many Catholics consider themselves on their own in the culture wars, without the support of the higher clergy, who often seemed paralyzed by some perceived obligation to baptize the *zeitgeist* — or at least politely to ignore it. We know that it is the multi-headed hydra of Modernism, Indifferentism, Liberalism, and Americanism that has led to this sad state of affairs.

In a godless secular society, where it often seems as though one needs heroic virtue merely to save his soul, it can often seem as though the forces of evil are running roughshod over the entire world, and will inevitably triumph. However, in the long run, that is not the case. First, we must never forget the words of Our Lord, “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (Matthew 28:20)” and we must realize also that nothing that happens is a surprise to Our Lord, who warned us in John 15:18, “If the world hate you, know ye, that it hath hated me before you.” Further, we know from Our Lady of Fatima that in the end her Immaculate Heart will triumph, and now this episode has generated some welcome but unexpected tangible signs of support at the top, or, to put it another way, some light shining through the clouds.

Many of our readers are probably familiar with Bishop Strickland, who, despite being head of a smaller, lesser known diocese (Tyler, Texas), has gained prominence for standing up unabashedly for the Catholic faith in recent years; likewise, Bishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, who, regarding the Dodgers’ actions, stood up for authentic Catholic religious sisters tweeting, “Decent people would not mock and blaspheme them. So we know what gods the Dodgers admin worships. Open desecration and

anti-Catholicism is not disqualifying. Disappointing but not surprising. . .” He then issued a call to the faithful to, “Gird your loins.” Indeed we must! And we must also not forget that Pope Leo XIII, in *Sapientiae Christianae*, told us that we Catholics are, “born for combat”!

Another prelate, Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, asked his own local baseball team, the Kansas City Royals, to “communicate their disapproval to the Dodgers’ management for their actions that show disrespect for the Catholic faith. . .,” and went on to say, “I am appalled and disgusted by the Dodgers honoring a group that calls themselves the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. This group openly mocks Catholic beliefs, and their actions are nothing less than blasphemous.” He added, “Tommy Lasorda would be appalled by the Dodgers’ actions.” (Lasorda, for those who don’t know, was a longtime Dodger manager and a practicing Catholic).

Likewise, Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, tweeted that, “The decision by the Dodgers to invite a group that seeks to openly disparage them (Los Angeles Catholics) and the millions of Catholics around the world is abhorrent and should be rescinded. . . This group specifically mocks the witness of religious sisters around the world who dedicate their lives to serving the poor and those in need.” Further, Archbishop Coakley, aware that anti-Catholicism has always been acceptable in the United States, added, “Would they

allow mockery of other faiths — our Jewish or Muslim brothers and sisters [sic]? Of course not.”

Archbishop Coakley’s statement was echoed by Bishop Michael Burbidge (Arlington, Virginia), who urged Dodger fans to boycott the team, and added, “They mock the Catholic faith and, why is it, it seems, that the only ones that can be subjected to this kind of public mockery and agitation and discrimination are Christians? It’s not tolerated with any other group.”

There are others, as well, who weighed in on the issue, all standing up for the faith and criticizing the Dodgers; among them, Bishop James Conley (Lincoln, Nebraska), Bishop Kevin Vann (Orange, California), Bishop Robert Barron (Winona-Rochester, Minnesota), and, last but not least, the archbishop of Los Angeles, Jose Gomez, who affirmed that the Dodgers’ actions had “caused disappointment, concern, anger, and dismay from our Catholic community.”

In an age when it can often seem that evil is triumphant, that we are immersed in a culture that glorifies mortal sin and exalts sexual perversion, in which we are seemingly alone in the war to save our own souls and that of our families, the difficulties can often seem overwhelming and discouraging. In the midst of the storm, when it seems as though the sun may never shine, it is a pleasure to find out that there are people in charge that feel the same way and can cause some light to come shining through the clouds. ■

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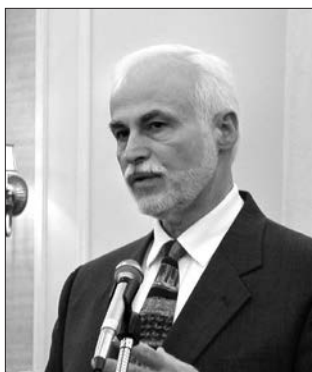
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Brother Lawrence, M.I.C.M., Tert.

MYSTICAL THEOLOGY IS ELUSIVE

During a recent conversation with my daughter, the discussion turned to St. Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and other great mystics and their ways of being more closely united with God. I admitted to her that I have spent decades reading their

works and biographies, studying their methods of meditation and contemplation, including famous works like *The Imitation of Christ*, *This Tremendous Lover*, *Dialogues of St. Catherine of Siena*, along with countless others, but to no avail. When trying to study the higher mystical things, it is almost like trying to learn Chinese without a dictionary or any guidance at all. These elevated concepts and aspirations make no sense to me whatsoever and I find myself occasionally at the extreme end of frustration, after having just finished carefully reading a section or chapter, and my mind remains a *tabula rasa*, a blackboard all erased.

Until our conversation, I really thought I was the only person I knew of who failed so miserably in this area. For years, I have heard others talk about the wonderful mystical theologians they love and follow and I have always had a “holy envy” of them. A few of my friends have described some of their favorites as well as some of their own extraordinary experiences and insights. Over the years, it seemed that it was my lot to slog along at the bottom of the heap of spiritual experiences and desires and, God-Willing, to trip over the line into eternity when I die, and with great and undeserved help from Our Lord, to wind up in Purgatory — until the end of the world.

How can I unite myself to Christ when I really do not know what the word “unite” even means? How can I know about an “interior life” when I look inside and see nothing, and when I don’t even know what “inside” means! Where should I be looking, in the mirror? That doesn’t have much to offer — a hollow reflection, an empty image with no life in it. Do I stare my own navel like a deranged Buddhist, hoping to see something more than is really there, or hoping to dissolve into nothing at all? And let’s not mention all the distractions! For crying out loud, I have ADD and I am distracted by *everything* — even the very idea of distraction itself. To keep my mind on a single topic for more than a few seconds is nearing the miraculous. How can I ever hope to unite with an ever moving target?

After I whined to her about the problem for a while, probably just to get me to shut up, my daughter suggested that others may have similar issues and it might be good to get them out in the open for further consideration, maybe even write an article about the situation. If being completely unqualified is a qualification for such an essay, then apparently I’m the one for the task.

I first decided to see if there is any common reason why every

one of these great mystics, mystical works, instructions on the interior life and works of meditation left me cold. For decades I thought it was because I have a very weak visual imagination and many meditations begin with trying to form pictures in the mind of a certain scene, maybe standing at the foot of the Cross, with Jesus crucified hanging above, maybe trying to imagine Baby Jesus and His Holy Mother in a cave at Christmas, maybe a thousand other things. None of them really worked for me. If I stare at a holy card, someone else’s imaginary depiction of the scene, I see the image on the card. Even if I find it emotionally compelling and beautiful, it does not lead to anything further. When I close my eyes, the image is gone, the moment has passed, which certainly seems to confirm that my imagination is wanting. Of course, my thoughts immediately move elsewhere, some other distraction, who knows what.

But as I considered the problem further, I realized that I cannot be the only person with this problem. Others must suffer from weak imaginations and are continually being distracted also. It did not seem in keeping with God’s Justice that He would deliberately deprive us of the means of doing the one thing the Church has always claimed that He desires for all men — to be united to Him.

I decided to begin at the beginning, so I retrieved my old Baltimore Catechism which answers the very essential question, “Why did God make me?” as follows: “To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.” As I reread both the question and the answer, I noticed something. There was not a single mention of “unitive state” or any of the other wonderful, yet elusive terms that are discussed at great length in so many of the more elevated works of the great saints and doctors. I took that as a clue. If it was possible for a little Catholic boy to save his soul with this minimal information, it would seem that the answer should be complete in itself, that somehow it contained everything that was necessary for a Catholic to know in order to achieve the type of unity with God that the Church claims He desires. On the other hand, it immediately reminded me of my plan to slog along and trip over the line into eternity, hoping to save my soul. While it seemed OK for a second grader, it didn’t seem like enough for a grown man, especially one who had been playing around at the base of the Ladder of Divine Ascent for so many years.

But what to do? I could continue to read through the wonderful esoteric works of mystical theology as I had for the past decades and continue to get the same result, or I could search for something different, something easier, something more in keeping with the Vice of Sloth, which turns out to be one of my major defects. Maybe mystical theology was simply too much work and I was afraid of the effort!

Partially as a result of this inquiry and partially because of a commitment I had made to prepare better for my death, I attended a 5-day silent Ignatian retreat. The retreat provided

conferences and opportunities for making several meditations each day. Very quickly, I discovered that it is possible to meditate, even if it is not possible to form clear pictures in the imagination, and that mulling over abstract ideas is enough to provide real insights and nudge the emotions to be a bit more cooperative.

Using a very truncated version of a 30-day retreat contained in *The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the participants were given five conferences per day in which one of the priests discussed a point of meditation, after which the retreatants were dismissed and provided with time to develop the topic further in quiet of their private rooms or the chapel. The correct environment, one that demanded complete silence and was free of most every day distractions, helped me to increase my concentration, and following the retreat master's suggestion that we write a prayer at the end of each meditation, I found it possible to express in words the essence of each one as the week progressed.

Over the course of the retreat, I had no mystical experiences, but after I returned home, and as I continued to review my notes and prayers from the exercises, I began to reflect on the fact that I have already made the Consecration to Our Lady

according to the method of St. Louis de Montfort. In fact, I renew the consecration every morning with my regular prayers. Slowly it started to dawn on me that I do not need to strive to climb the Ladder of Divine Ascent like the great mystics. As de Montfort explains it in *True Devotion to Mary*, I have already chosen the easy path to unity with Our Lord, since I leave everything in the hands of Our Lady. Through slavery to her Immaculate Heart, I gain automatic access to the level of mystical experience that God deigns necessary and appropriate for me at this point in my spiritual development.

The end result of my inquiry is I am satisfied that I can continue to admire the great mystics, even though I cannot penetrate their writings and I am certainly unable to replicate their amazing feats. Instead of feeling like I am slogging along at the bottom of the Ladder of Divine Ascent, I am now content to follow where Our Lady leads me, even if it means that the writings and ideas of some of the greatest saints will always remain unavailable to me. Through Mary I will fulfill the reason God created me: "to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next." ■

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EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS

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

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

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

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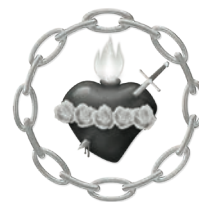
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