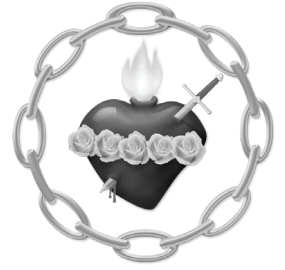


# MANCIPIA

THE REPORT OF THE CRUSADE OF SAINT BENEDICT CENTER

January/February 2025



Madonna of the Pomegranate — Sandro Botticelli



Br. André Marie,  
M.I.C.M., Prior

## PRIOR'S COLUMN

ON FATHER CHAD RIPPERGER'S RECENT STATEMENTS CONCERNING 'NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH'

In early October of 2024, Father Chad Ripperger appeared with Terry Barber and Jesse Romero on their podcast, "Full Sheen Ahead." A small excerpt of the interview was turned into a short stand-alone video on YouTube and entitled, "Exorcist Explains How Catholics/Non-Catholics Are Saved."

That clip begins with Terry Barber mentioning the concept of "limited papal infallibility" (meaning that the Holy Father can possibly be wrong when not invoking his unique charism of infallibility) and asking Father Ripperger about a recent statement of Pope Francis to the effect that all religions are paths that lead to God. Father ultimately and truthfully answered the question by denying the assertion that God positively wills non-Catholic religions and that they are all paths to God. He called them "false religions."

Before giving that response, though, Father Ripperger prefaced his remarks by bringing up the dogma, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. He stated that this dogma is undeniably Catholic teaching, taught by the Fourth Lateran Council and the Council of Florence (just for the record: he did not mention Pope Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam*). He affirmed strongly that this doctrine has been formally defined and has been otherwise taught by numerous popes and doctors of the Church.

He then went on to speak of two "errors" concerning this doctrine. The first is those who "reject it." According to these folks, different religions are different paths of salvation. Protestants are saved by their Protestantism, etc. He added here, "This doesn't mean Protestants can't be saved; it just means *they're not saved by virtue of their religion.*"

### "The Feeneyite Position"

The second "opposite extreme" he called "the Feeneyite position," which he described thus:

Unless you are a formally baptized Catholic you cannot be saved. The Vatican never condemned that proposition, but they did tell him, "Hey, you gotta come over and answer this, because that was not what the Church had ever held."

He then went on to cite the Council of Trent speaking of the necessity of Baptism *in re aut voto* ("in reality or by intention [desire]") in order to be justified. The reference is to the Tridentine Decree of Justification (Session VI, c. IV), which describes justification,

...as being a translation, from that state wherein man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace, and of the adoption of the sons of God, through the second

Adam, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. And this translation, since the promulgation of the Gospel, cannot be effected, without the laver of regeneration, or the desire thereof, as it is written; unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

This says that justification — the transfer into the state of grace — cannot happen without Baptism, either *in reality*, that is, by actually receiving the sacrament, or *in voto* (by having the intention or desire to receive the sacrament).

Father Ripperger then affirmed that there are people "outside the visible structure of the Church, but who were put to death because of their belief in Jesus Christ." Presumably, here, he is speaking of martyred catechumens, but he did not further elaborate on this point.

Our position on the analogous baptisms of desire and blood amounts to a theological opinion: "We hold, as a theological opinion only, that, since Pentecost, God Almighty can and does incorporate all the elect into His Mystical Body by actual sacramental Baptism." (See "Doctrinal Beliefs," No. 19, with its footnote, at Catholicism.org.) Concerning the theological possibility of those "baptisms" being efficacious for salvation, see the statement of our position in that same "Doctrinal Beliefs" document, and my Preface to the 2018 reprint of Father Leonard Feeney's book, *Bread of Life*.

Unfortunately, for a long time, we have had Catholics, including Catholic priests, twisting that theological possibility into actual heresy by telling people, "You don't need to be baptized in order to be saved." That is actual heresy according to the Council of Trent. (Session 7, Can. 5: "If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation, let him be anathema.")

### The Apocalypse?

After making the point about baptism, very curiously, Father Ripperger then made reference to the book of the Apocalypse, which speaks of people of "every nation and race" being saved. He did not specify the passage he had in mind — and it would not reasonably be expected for him to do so in such a format — but I assume he had in mind either Apocalypse 14:6 or, more likely, 5:9-10. But this does not seem to have anything to do with the subject at hand because the Church, being supranational and universal, is made up of members who are indeed called "out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Apoc. 5:9).

### The Mediation of the Church, the Mystical Body

Father Ripperger then went on,

Because the Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ — and Christ is the only one who saves; that's absolutely clear in Scripture — it's part of divine tradition and revelation. There's no way of getting around

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that. Only Christ saves: Muhammad doesn't save; Buddha doesn't save; none of these others save. Only Jesus Christ saves. Now, that means therefore that if anyone outside the Church is saved, they're still saved by means of Jesus Christ, which basically means that they are saved by means of the Mystical Body of Christ.

What Father is saying here is that people *are actually saved outside the Church* because "Christ is the only one who saves," and, as long as we hold that Jesus Christ is the unique Savior of all who are saved, we can positively state that there are people saved *by Jesus* but *outside the Church*. But that would seem to contradict the Fourth Lateran Council which Father Ripperger cited: "There is but one universal Church of the faithful, outside which no one at all is saved" — as well as the Florentine Council's definition he also cited:

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.

Father Ripperger continued,

And that's why I made the observation in some of my other podcasts ... that all grace comes into the world by means of the Catholic Church because the Catholic Church is the Mystical Body, and all grace comes through Jesus Christ, so it all comes in by that. So that means that if a Protestant is saved [he's] saved by mediation of the Catholic Church: that the grace has flowed from the Catholic Church to [him].

But how does this mediation work? We know that, for Catholics, grace is mediated to us through the Mystical Body by way of the threefold episcopal office of teaching, governing, and sanctifying. In the life of the faithful, this practically translates into the life of faith, the sacramental life, and the moral life, which are all of a piece. But how does the Catholic Church, which is exactly identical with the Mystical Body, *mediate* salvation to non-Catholics? Does this happen *negatively*, because these non-Catholics simply *do not formally reject* the faith, morals, and sacraments of the

Church? That could hardly be called mediation.

Is this mediation a matter of the Church praying for them? If that is the case, then — looking at the traditional Roman *lex orandi* — we see that what the Church prays for in the case of non-Catholics is *their conversion to the Catholic faith*. Here I have in mind the ancient "Great Intercessions" of Good Friday (the very prayers which gave rise to the traditional axiom *lex orandi lex credendi* — the law of praying is the law of belief):

Let us pray also for heretics and schismatics: that our Lord God would be pleased to rescue them from all their errors; and recall them to our holy mother the Catholic and Apostolic Church. ... Almighty and everlasting God, who savest all, and wouldst that no one should perish: look on the souls that are led astray by the deceit of the devil: that having set aside all heretical evil, the hearts of those that err may repent, and return to the unity of Thy truth. Through our Lord, etc.

#### **Valid Baptisms of Non-Catholics**

After speaking of the mediation of the Mystical Body, Father Ripperger then brought up the valid Baptisms of many non-Catholic Christians:

There's also an issue that the Church has also been dealing with: if a Protestant is validly baptized, which the Church does recognize in some cases ... what's infused [in] them at the time of Baptism is sanctifying grace. Well, if they're in the state, of sanctifying grace that means they're part of the Communion of Saints, which is part of the Catholic Church ... even though visibly they might be outside of it. It's also infusing [in] them at the time of their baptism [the virtue of] Catholic faith, so if they never commit a moral sin, and if they never formally reject the Catholic faith — that doesn't mean that they don't necessarily believe it — but [if] they never formally reject it, it's possible for them, because of invincible ignorance, to have not committed moral sin [thereby losing the] state of grace, and [having] not actually lost their faith — and as a result they can actually be saved.

To help us parse this, I would like to quote from Benedict XIV's Brief, *Singulari Nobis*. This is found in Denzinger-Hünemann, Nos. 2566-2570. The heading in Denzinger's is "Incorporation into the Church by Means of Baptism."

When a heretic baptizes someone, provided he uses the legitimate form and matter, ... the latter is marked with the baptismal character.... [S]omeone who has received valid baptism from a heretic is made a member of the Catholic Church by virtue of that <baptism>; for the personal error of the one baptizing cannot deprive him of this happiness, provided the baptizer confers the sacrament in the faith of the true Church and observes

her provisions in what relates to the validity of baptism. ... [I]f the heretic, as often happens, christens an infant unable to make an act of faith, this is no obstacle to his receiving the habit of faith at baptism. ... [I]f they reach the age at which they can distinguish right from wrong for themselves and then adhere to the errors of the one who baptized them, persons who were baptized by heretics are rejected from the unity of the Church and are deprived of all those benefits that those remaining in the Church enjoy...

We readily acknowledge that there is such a thing as merely material heresy and merely material schism, neither of which would separate a person from the unity of the Church. But the idea that a Protestant can retain such a state well into adulthood, along with freedom from mortal sin — when Protestantism generally militates against the need to avoid mortal sin — would require an astonishing miracle of grace. It makes more sense to accept that God’s grace would lead such a good-willed person to the full internal assent and external practice of the Catholic faith, than that God would merely keep him in an invincibly ignorant state.

#### Sufficient Grace

Father Ripperger then stated the common theological opinion — one which we accept — that “all adults have sufficient grace” to save their souls. How this grace operates is, of course, a sheer mystery that we cannot fathom. However, we believe that the analogy of faith demands that we come up with no theory that would imperil any clearly defined Catholic doctrine, such as the necessity of the Church for salvation. Saint Thomas’ explanation in *The Disputed Questions on Truth* is apposite: “[I]f someone so brought up [i.e., “in the forest or among wolves”] followed the direction of natural reason in seeking good and avoiding evil, we must most certainly hold that God would either reveal to him through internal inspiration what had to be believed, or would send some preacher of the faith to him as He sent Peter to Cornelius (Acts 10:20).” Suarez, in *De Praedestinatione et Reprobatione*, is equally good and respectful of the analogy of faith:



“Whoever has not set up obstacles against it will receive the light or the call..., either externally by means of men...or by interior illumination by means of angels.”

Father Ripperger went on to say that such Protestants are “saved *in spite of their religion*, not *because of it*.” Let me note that earlier Father had said that these

people have never formally rejected the Catholic faith, but here he is identifying their “religion” as something clearly other than the Catholic religion. This may be pushing us to the limits of the principle of non-contradiction. Can one *formally* adhere to heretical tenets of a false religion in such wise that it is rightly called “*his religion*” — and, at the same time, be only materially in heresy and schism?

#### Yes, They Can Be Saved, But ‘Not Where They Are’

When Father Ripperger said that Protestants can be saved but “not... by virtue of their religion,” I think an additional layer of distinction is necessary. (And again, we’re talking here about people who have never formally defected from the faith or unity of the Church, and have remained in the state of grace.) Such persons, if they indeed exist, are not saved *as Protestants*, but *as Catholics*. In other words, there is a proper name for the proverbial validly baptized “Protestant” who remains not guilty of formal heresy or schism: *Catholic* — even if he is in some “canonically irregular” situation within the Church. If he is also not guilty of any mortal sin, then he is a Catholic in the state of grace. But two psychological problems immediately present themselves here:

1. Such persons, when presented with Catholic truth, should recognize it as such and not contradict it. These are the ones who eventually become converts. For good will is manifest by the actual doing of the good, not by clinging to a merely material evil.
2. Such black swan “Protestants” also heroically contradict many of the fundamental tenets of Protestantism, e.g., *sola fides*, which denies the necessity of moral purity and good works for salvation. They also live the life of grace without the manifold benefits of the sacramental life, which good priests like Father Ripperger tend to remind Catholics over and over again are morally necessary *for them*.

Orestes Brownson, a convert and arguably the greatest apologist for the Catholic Church America ever produced, said it very well in *The Great Question*:

That those in societies alien to the Church, invincibly ignorant of the Church, if they correspond to the graces they receive, and persevere, will be saved, **but not where they are**, or without being brought to the Church. [Emphasis mine.] ■

*Email Brother André Marie at bam@catholicism.org.*



Sr. Mary Joseph, M.I.C.M.

## CONVENT CORNER

### THE TREASURES OF THE HOLY GHOST

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Once upon a time there lived a rich man who wanted to spend his money giving good things to the poor. One day he found a group of raggedy children playing in the street and said to them, “Come, boys and girls. Each of you must tell me some-

thing you would like, and I will buy it for you. Anything at all. What do your little hearts desire?”

The children who had gathered around hesitated, looking slightly confused, but finally one dirty-faced little boy spoke up. “I don’t want anything, Sir, but thank you anyway.” The other children nodded at one another and seemed to agree that none of them wanted anything either.

The rich man chuckled with surprise, “You don’t mean that. Perhaps your mama has taught you it is not polite to ask for things. Well, well, this is different. I want to buy something for you — for each of you. There are lots of nice things in the shops. Food, clothing, toys. You needn’t worry. I will explain to your mamas.”

This seemed to help a bit. The dirty-faced boy spoke up again, “Well, I suppose it would be nice to have some trash. If you please, Sir, could you buy me some trash?” Again the other children looked as though they agreed. Heads nodded, eyes brightened, and a few voices were heard echoing, “Oh yes, I want trash, too.”

The bewildered rich man paused before replying. “No, children, you don’t want trash. Trash is something thrown out because it has been ruined. I want to give you something nice and new. Come, come. There must be something — how about something to eat?”

The children looked disappointed, but then a little girl stepped forward to try again. “I know something, Sir; may I have some pig slop to eat?”

The rich man’s eyebrows shot up in astonishment. Could these children really be so poverty stricken as to not know what an apple is? “My dear,” smiled the rich man, “pig slop is not nice food. I cannot . . . or at least I will not . . . no dear, pick something else. What about an apple or some warm bread with butter? Have you ever had ice cream? It is simply delicious! Why don’t I buy you some ice cream?”

The little girl tried to keep up a polite face, but she was clearly uninterested in this offer. “That’s alright, Sir, I don’t want any ice cream. Thank you.”

Before the rich man could argue, another urchin piped up,

“How about a rotten, slimy apple? Can I get one of those?” This was followed by several similarly disturbing requests:

“Yes, I want a slimy worm.”

“How ’bout some garbage?”

“Is junk okay?”

“I want filth!”

“Could I have some sludge?”

The rich man looked around at the boys and girls in disbelief. He was dumbstruck! These poor little wretches didn’t seem to understand anything about good food. Scratching his head and slowly recovering from his shock, he decided there was only one thing to do at this point. He smilingly leaned forward, rubbing his hands together, and said in an excited whisper, “I know! I will bring you a surprise — something you will love. Wait here. I’ll be right back with a treat.”

The rich man found a lovely candy shop and purchased all the tasty treats he could find. There were colorful lollipops, caramel filled chocolates, gumdrops, mints, candy necklaces, and saltwater taffies, to name only a few. He hurried back to the street corner where the ragamuffins waited for him with anticipation.

He pulled the goodies out of the bag and placed them on the outstretched palms. “This is for you, and one for you, and you — I bought plenty. Please eat as much as you like. And if the bag runs out, we’ll buy some more.”

Just as the rich man was beginning to think he had achieved success, the expressions on the children’s faces checked his delight. They looked at the candy in their dirty hands with great aversion. Several little palms recoiled before he could give them anything. They looked at each other to see if anyone was being brave enough to take a bite. A few of the boys cautiously sniffed the candy only to find their suspicions confirmed. They put the candy back in the bag, still doing their best to be polite to this man who had interrupted their play with so many unwanted gifts. One by one the children thanked him, returned the candy, and ran off to play, until there was only the one dirty-faced boy left looking at the big yellow gumdrop in his hand with great skepticism. The rich man, who was feeling thoroughly mystified and saddened by now, had this last hope before him. “Will you take a bite to taste it? It’s sweet and lemony. I’d be so happy if you would try it. . . .”

The little boy was feeling sorry for the man. He took a deep breath to firm up his resolution and then bravely popped the whole gumdrop into his mouth. He began to

chew with a face full of curiosity, but a moment later the curiosity was replaced with surprise, pucker, and the faintest beginnings of delight. He was giving his full concentration to the new and unexpected sensation taking place inside his mouth. When he finished swallowing his gumdrop, the boy looked at the rich man, who was beaming now, and said, “Hey, Mister, I think I kinda liked that.” Then licking his lips, “Say . . . uh . . . can I try another one?”

— The End —

Collect for the Fourth Sunday After Pentecost:

Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be opened to the prayers of Thy suppliant people; and that Thou mayst grant them their petitions, make them to ask for such things as shall please Thee.

Amen! ■

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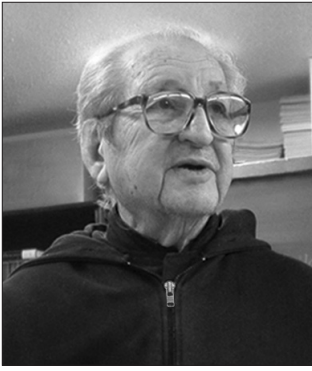
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Brother Francis, M.I.C.M.

# FOUNDER’S COLUMN

## SLAVERY TO MARY’S IMMACULATE HEART AND THE CALL TO SANCTITY

(Originally published in 1986)

*Jesus Christ is not known as He ought to be, because Mary has been up to this time unknown. — Saint Louis Marie de Montfort*

**B**y this observation the great Marian saint of the early eighteenth century certainly did not mean that devotion to the powerful Mother of God had not existed before this time. On the contrary, the Church has honored Her with unceasing love and devotion from the days of the Apostles — indeed from the moment when Jesus uttered from the Cross, “Behold thy mother.”

What Saint Louis Marie meant was that, through all earlier ages of Christendom, few were privileged to understand just how powerful She truly is, and why. It was his purpose, therefore, to be the Apostle of Mary for the latter ages, unfolding to the world utterly sublime mysteries concerning the Queen of Heaven that previously had been only inchoatively comprehended, but that had obviously been revealed to this extraordinary French priest by special grace from the Holy Ghost (which is why we expect that Saint Louis Marie will one day be declared a Doctor of the Church).

Yet, despite all the splendid works of Saint Louis Marie and other Marian saints since his time, it is tragically evident that Our Lady is less known, less loved, and Her powerful intercession less implored today than at any time in the past. This alone would be ample cause for organizing a legion of men and women in an apostolic crusade dedicated to making known to the world the glories of Mary.

As is even more evident, however, this sorrowful ignorance and neglect of the Immaculate Heart is only symptomatic of another fatal disease of spirit amongst Christianity: the increasing loss of faith in, and of adherence to, Catholic doctrine. That deadly contagion demands all the more our total effort and energies in launching a fervent Crusade both to defend and restore Catholic truths in their fullness and to propagate the one true Faith throughout the world.

Toward building a nationwide army to help carry out that crucial cause in our own country, our last *Crusader* issued a call to each of you to become a saint. This was no idle notion or vacant challenge.

Striving for sainthood is indeed the duty of every human

soul, as we read in Chapter X of Saint Luke: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbour as thyself.*

But, as we also stated earlier, the way to sainthood — thanks to the great “secret” of sanctity given to the world by Saint Louis Marie — has never been made easier. For that secret consists in simply giving our whole will over to Mary, our Holy Queen and Mother, and letting Her direct our lives and offer to God all our works perfected by Her holy hands.

Having therefore promised to explain further how you, by resolving to take an active role in our Crusade, can “enlist,” so to speak, in Our Lady’s holy militia — to help secure the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart, while at the same time establishing your own place among Her saints — let us now proceed to more of that discussion.

### A Nationwide Third Order

For many years now, we have been building a Third Order community of lay men and women — adults and youths, husbands and wives and families — in all stations of life as an adjunct to our regular religious community of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (*Mancipia Immaculata Cordis Mariae*). Unlike other third orders, ours does not require vows. Its members are bound only by a simple promise made to Our Lord. But also unlike other third orders, ours is not simply a devotional community. It is an actively apostolic one dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of defending and propagating the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith.

While we do have members from many distant states in our Third Order, most at present are from the Northeast. This is because in nurturing our lay community, we have until now drawn its numbers only from individuals with whom we have had ongoing personal contact.

What we have been preparing for, however, is expanding this Third Order community nationwide — and beyond — by enrolling, hopefully, thousands and then tens of thousands of men and women who may have had no previous contact with Saint Benedict Center, but who would heartily approve of our work, once they became sufficiently acquainted with it, and would be eager to serve Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart through this apostolate. After celebrating the two-thousandth anniversary of Her Immaculate Conception on December eighth, we felt all the more inspired and confident finally to begin implementing these most worthy plans this year.

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### Who is eligible for membership in the Third Order?

In one sense, every faithful Catholic who truly loves the Blessed Mother is already part of our crusade, at least in a supportive way. For *truly* to love Mary is to be Her docile and faithful child. And all devoted children of Mary are united by grace in one spiritual family serving Her will and Her cause in humility. All who meet these simple qualifications, therefore, are eligible to become tertiaries (Third Order members) of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Some of our readers, to be sure, will merely remain followers of our crusade and, by their prayers and other help, valued friends and supporters of our work. These, too, though they may never formally become tertiaries, will be an important part of the crusade to convert America.

But those of you who want to serve Our Lady more completely, and to hasten the promised triumph of Her Immaculate Heart — those indeed who want to become Her saints — will find membership in our Third Order to be a uniquely blessed opportunity for pursuing those holy ends.

#### How does one enroll in the Third Order?

Three things are required of our tertiaries. First, as ours is truly a crusade, our tertiaries are in a very real sense members of Mary's army. They are "knights," as Saint Maximilian Kobe designated those followers of these same apostolic labors in Europe, — spiritual soldiers conquering souls and defending the one true Faith. And, like all

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### Striving for sainthood is indeed the duty of every human soul.

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soldiers, they must be suitably outfitted for their spiritual stations. Therefore, tertiaries equip themselves with the same three accoutrements as do our regular religious: the Brown Scapular for a mantle; the Miraculous Medal for a breastplate; and the Rosary, which is recited daily (at least five decades), for spiritual armament.

Second, like all soldiers who have sworn allegiance to a sovereign leader, our tertiaries render theirs to the sovereign Queen of Heaven. Each pledges that allegiance, after proper preparation, by an Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart prescribed by Saint Louis Marie de Montfort in his *True Devotion to Mary*.

Third, as we said last month, all armies must be organized and must function with concerted purpose and loyalty. Thus, a tertiary of our Third Order, when making a solemn Act of Consecration, also is asked to make a promise,

in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, to support and defend the Crusade of Saint Benedict Center.

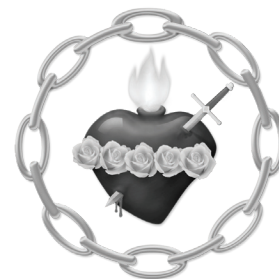
#### Taking the First Steps

Each of you can immediately fulfill the first requirement. The other two requirements, if as yet you do not understand them, will become very clear and simple for you as we prescribe in the months ahead how to prepare for them. For, though they are in no way difficult steps, they do require prayerful preparation and guidance before they can be taken.

But that preparation and guidance can be initiated right away. For the very best way to begin the necessary spiritual formation for becoming a saint and soldier of the Immaculate Heart is to read *The Glories of Mary*, by Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori.

To paraphrase the opening quotation from Saint Louis Marie, no one can really claim to know Jesus without knowing Mary. Furthermore, no one can know Mary sufficiently until he has read this exquisite masterpiece composed by the most recent Doctor of the Church in time, Saint Alphonsus. [This was written before St. Thérèse was declared a Doctor of the Church.] If one does not know Mary — without whom, say the saints, none can be saved — how can he love Mary? And if one does not love Her, how can he save his soul? Save for the most calloused and wretched hearts, we dare say no one can read Saint Alphonsus' beautiful treatise without naturally and quite literally falling in love with Mary. Which is why one of our tertiaries has said: "If I were pope, I would make *The Glories of Mary* mandatory reading for every Catholic."

To be sure, none who would truly serve our Blessed Mother can ever hope to do so without first properly knowing and loving Her. And so, though we are not the pope, nonetheless we do require at least of our Third Order candidates that they read this magnificent volume, which, after the Holy Bible, is perhaps the most beautiful book ever authored. ▪



## Spiritual Diary - Daily Meditations for the Year

Anonymously published in 1775, this book swept through the Catholic world and multiple editions were published in quick succession. It remained readily available to generations of Catholics in many languages. The author remains unknown to this day. In a brief preface to the 4th edition of 1778 the following advice was given:

“To draw the utmost profit from this volume, mere reading will not suffice. It must be read with calm reflection, deep thought, and ardent desire to translate into action whatever is found to be beneficial to the individual soul.”

Without a doubt, the *Spiritual Diary* is one of the most widely read works in ascetical literature. Over the centuries, countless souls have drawn part of their spiritual formation from meditation upon the saintly advice contained in these pages. Its collections of sayings and examples of saints provide a source of meditation for numerous devout souls.

The meditations are arranged for the calendar year with one of twelve virtues for each month. Perfection, Humility, Mortification, Patience, Meekness, Obedience, Simplicity, Diligence, Prayer, Confidence, Charity and Union are the virtues chosen, and under each virtue are gathered pertinent sayings and examples of the saints for every day of the month. A thought may be read daily, or the reader may prefer to read the different sections according to his spiritual needs.

Many have guessed that the writer was a devotee of St. Alphonsus because of the pattern of the meditations and the numerous direct quotes from his writings. But other spiritual writers widely quoted are: St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Teresa of Avila.

Whoever compiled this treasure house of advice has earned the lasting gratitude of Loreto's editor who has used this book almost daily for over forty years. Since it has not been readily available to the general public since the last known edition from 1962, we have decided to issue this modern edition in the hopes that a new generation of 21st century Catholics may find as much spiritual benefit herein, as this editor has.

Douglas Bersaw - Editor

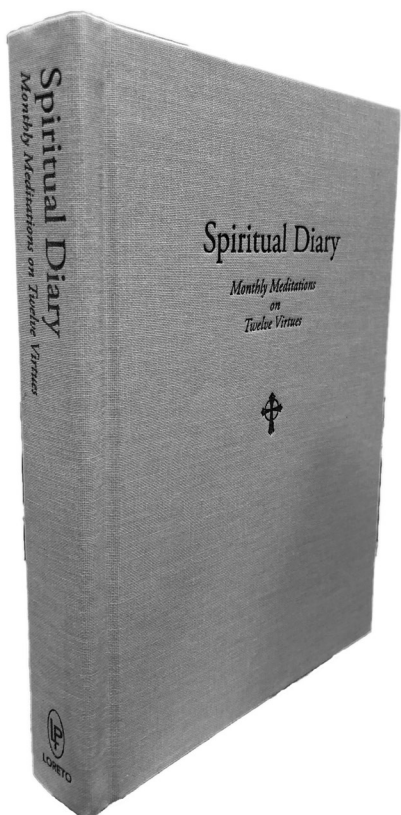
Excerpts:

Simplicity is nothing but an act of love, pure and simple, with only one aim: to acquire the love of God. Our soul is truly simple when we have no other goal than this in mind, in everything we do. — St. Francis de Sales

St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi once said: “If I believed I could become a Seraph by uttering a word — even an indifferent word — for any other end than the love of God, I certainly would not say it.”

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Charles Colombe

## SURVIVING THE WASTELAND

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In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.  
— Christina Rossetti

The above words and Gustav Holst’s haunting melody which accompany them are so much a part of the Christmas season that they are almost become a cliché. But *almost* is the operative word here. For while the main celebrations of Christmas may end even for most Catholics with the Epiphany on January 6, the Christmas season extends through January, finding its end at last on Candlemas Eve. If the Three Kings open the month, then the anniversary of the murder of Louis XVI on January 21, the feast of Bl. Charlemagne on January 28, and yet another regicide anniversary for Charles I on January 30 end it in an equally regal manner.

As the cold and snowy month (in northern climes) makes its chilly course through time, one thinks also of the interplay of light and dark through the Advent and Christmas seasons, starting with the Rorate Masses, and ending with the great Candlemass on February 2: “the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” resonates very strongly this time of year — not only in church, but even just walking home at night through the snowy wastes, and viewing not only the lovely Christmas lights so many people put up on their houses, but even just the light from the houses themselves. There is enchantment about, for all that one is in a cold wasteland; it gives a sort of Medieval feeling.

To be sure, there is a great deal about Christmas that still reflects the Middle Ages — and not just the liturgy, if one is fortunate enough to have access to Latin-rite, Ordinarate, or Eastern observances of Christmas. So many of our carols either date from that era — or sound as if they do. The holly, mistletoe, and evergreens bring us back in touch with the world of our ancestors, as do many of the foods of the season. The bringing of the sprig of Glastonbury thorn to the King is exactly the sort of thing I have in mind. Said thorn links us back to St. Joseph of Arimathea’s arrival in Britain to spread the Faith, and latterly with the tales of King Arthur.

Christmas always makes me think of the Arthurian legends. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* takes place over Christmas, and the *Morte d’Arthur* offers several Yuletide episodes. But above all, I am reminded of the Holy Grail. Now that might seem a bit odd, given that most of that cycle of legends deals with Pentecost, Easter, and Good Friday. Not too surprising, of course, since the sacred vessel that Gawain, Parsifal, Galahad, and the others go in search of is

so closely bound up with the Passion of Our Lord, of which the Grail is a relic. But while St. Joseph of Arimathea in the earlier stories brought a relic of the Precious Blood, like the one at Bruges, he gets roped into the later tales as bringing the Grail. And so we return to Christmas.

In various versions of the story, the Grail has been protected in a sort of Grail Kingdom; but the current King, a descendant of St. Joseph, has been sorely wounded. As a result, his territory has become quite literally a wasteland. Daily reception of the Sacramental food the Grail provides keeps the King alive — but by itself, it can neither heal the King nor the Wasteland. For that to happen, a brave knight must come to the Grail Castle, and ask a question — “What is the Grail, and whom does it serve?” Until and unless that happens, the Grail, its wounded custodian, and his people are doomed to carry on their grey lives in twilight.

This time of year, going for a walk always makes me think of that Wasteland. In Austria and the Westchester County of my childhood, “In the Bleak Midwinter” certainly conjures up the scenes of this time of year. But even in Southern California, where I have spent most of my life, the sepia-toned mellow sunlight of this time of year lends a bittersweet melancholy to the scenery — a yearning for things above and beyond what we have in this world of sins and shadow.

Seasonal imagination aside, the world begins 2025 in a most unhappy manner. Both Church and State across the planet appear trapped in Wastelands of their own; the former fed by the Blessed Sacrament but not healed, the latter similarly nourished by taxes but seemingly incapable of doing more than violating God’s law and cancelling those who are not onboard. The leadership of both often appear, to put it politely, crazed. It would be easy to despair of things getting better, and to hate those by whom the Wasteland is made waste. How to survive the Wasteland without succumbing to either?

Unlike Parsifal, there is no one we can address our questions to in the outward world — at least none with the power of healing the Wasteland in which we all live. But we can ask ourselves the key, liberating, and salvific questions in the depths of our hearts: “What is the Church, and whom does she serve?;” we can ask a similar question of the State in the same interior spot. To the first query, must come the reply, “the Mystical Body of Christ, who brings us the means of Salvation.” To the second, “the Handmaid and Protector of the Church, who assists in her mission by seeing to the

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Common Good.” There are many ways these answers might be phrased, of course — there is no one set formula. But these replies or those like them will remind us that there is a vision beyond the Wasteland in which we dwell.

Sadly, unlike the stories, our asking and answering those questions will not automatically heal the outer wasteland. But they can keep it out of our souls. If we embrace the Truth in our lives — even when it gets us into outward trouble — it will go a long way to letting us see things as they are, not as some blind positive-thinking sort of New Age exercise, but a deep realisation that the Master of Heaven and Earth is willing to do all things He can to bring us to Him forever. Hard and yet simple as it is, what we need to do is respond — to try to subordinate our Will to His, to use the means of Salvation He has given us, and to try to help our fellow human beings do the same.

Of course, in time, if enough people do the same thing, the Wasteland in Church and State may abate somewhat. We may receive leadership at least as concerned about our well-being as their own. We may have hierarchs who see the Cross of Christ ever before them, and political heads who understand we are committed to them by God — not cattle to be exploited and played with. The majority of both sets may one day realise that their eternal fate depends in great degree upon how they handle us. But while it may well recede, so long as we linger this side of the grave, its shadow shall remain.

I myself have wandered some of the actual Arthurian landscape. In Brittany I have wandered the enchanted forest of Broceliande, and prayed in the Grail Church of Trehontereuc. To the top of Glastonbury Tor I have twice climbed and drunk from the Chalice Well at the foot, as many times walked the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, and prayed at the renewed Catholic Shrine. I have been to the “Round Table” at Caerleon, and Arthur’s Austrian shrine of Maria Lanzendorf. One day I hope to see Cornwall, with Tintagel’s castle and Halls of Arthur, and the battle centre of Slaughterbridge, and the Round Table at Winchester, and the Green Chapel, whether at Ludchurch or Wetton Mill. But for all of that; and for all that I believe that the Holy Grail is in Valencia Cathedral; and for all the pleasure and (I hope) blessings I have derived from the many shrines I have seen on four continents, and the many more I hope to venerate — of Our Lord, Our Lady, and many Saints — pilgrimage is only a temporary easing of the pain the Wasteland inflicts upon us all.

More lasting is that which comes from frequent use of the Sacraments and devotions — especially those surrounding the Blessed Sacrament. As well, in the Church Year, in the joys that come from living, even in our nostalgia for elsewhere and when, we can delineate the boundaries of the Wasteland. Let us pray and work as hard as ever we can that all whom we love and we ourselves persevere until we are brought beyond those boundaries to drink from that Grail that never ends. ■

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SCAN TO LEARN MORE





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

After eight years as a tertiary and having attended the conference nearly every one of those years, my expectations for the 2024 conference were high, and I was not disappointed. As always, the speakers provided food for thought and inspiration.

The theme of this year's conference was a timely one. In a time when it seems as though our society and what remains of the formerly Christian west has totally lost its moorings and is circling the drain at an ever increasing rate, the theme chosen by Brother André Marie was "*Sursum Corda: Lifting up Our Hearts in a Time of Crisis*," and every one of the speakers was able to speak according to that theme.

The first day began, as usual, with Brother André's opening remarks, and was followed by Sister Marie Gabrielle who spoke on, "A Thousand Times Happy: An Exhortation to Love Mary and Fear Nothing." While Sister had previously recorded talks and has spoken previously at the conference as part of a "panel" of Sisters making a presentation, this was her first solo venture as a conference speaker.

During her presentation, Sister outlined the characteristics of what she named the "Five Headed Hydra of Fear": the fear of difficulty, the fear of having to change, the fear of the future, the fear of not overcoming our weakness under trials (also known as fear of failure), and the fear of abandoning oneself to Providence. As Sister stated, we are our own worst enemy! What we often overlook is that the answer to this Five Headed Hydra is true devotion to Our Lady, a holy abandonment that can pick us up if and when we fall. As always, Sister's exposition of her subject provided much in the way of truths to ponder.

Following Sister Marie Gabrielle, Brother Lawrence Mary, a long time member of the Third Order of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, spoke on "Brother Francis, Crusader for Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom." While most of the people reading this article presumably know something about Brother Francis, not all knew him personally. Brother Lawrence Mary, however, did know Brother Francis personally, and has recently spent many hours interviewing people who knew him. The story of Brother Francis' life sets forth, among other things, the way in which he caused our Order to become a "crusade," in addition to being a religious community. This man, who was so determined to preserve Catholic dogma and bring about the conversion of our nation, deserves to be remembered in this soon to be published biography, which should be an inspiration to all who read it.

Brother André Marie, Prior of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, spoke next on, "The Absolute Primacy of Jesus

Christ and Its Implications for our Crusade." While most Catholics would presumably not argue with the concept of the primacy of Jesus Christ on its face, Brother André addresses it from a specific standpoint: the question of whether the Incarnation would have taken place in the absence of Original Sin and its implication for our Crusade in our fight against the currently popular heresies of Indifferentism, Liberalism, Americanism, and Modernism.

While this question has long been debated among theologians, Brother André shows that the position taken by the Scotists actually has the most merit: Our Lord's Incarnation was not only something that occurred in the context of history but is rather the point of history and of Creation itself. In other words, the Incarnation did not occur because something had gone wrong with God's plan, but rather was the reason for creation.

Longtime Catholic historian and author Charles Coulombe, who has spoken at many of our conferences, gave us all a great deal of food for thought in his talk entitled, "Waybread of the Angels: Navigating the Dark Forest of Our Times." While using the analogy of the forests dwelt in by our ancestors with regard to our modern times, his premise was that frequent holy communion is necessary to assist us along the way.

After Charles's talk, the next speaker in our two-day conference was our master of ceremonies, radio broadcaster Mike Church, whose Crusade Channel features, among others, our own Brother André Marie and his Reconquest program. Mike's presentation, entitled, "Date Night at the Movies- Mary and the Holy Ghost" was proof that even in our modern decadent culture, the Holy Ghost and Our Lady still are at work influencing our modern film and music.

Included in Mike's presentation was a reminder that at one time Christian influence was powerful in the film industry through the action of the Legion of Decency in rating films according to their content. To those who do not recognize the name, at one point, at least up until the 1960's, the Legion of Decency ratings were posted in Catholic Churches across the United States, and to achieve commercial success, films needed to receive some sort of a positive rating from the organization. Unfortunately, as time went by, seemingly Christian influence in the media became less obvious.

However, as Mike said in his talk, the Holy Ghost still shows his influence on occasion, as when Christian, Marian, chivalric, or pro-life themes come out in modern music and Hollywood productions, even if this happens inadvertently from the point of view of the musicians or filmmakers themselves. This presentation is, along with some of Mike's previous conference talks, supportive of our theme "*Sursum Corda*," and is intended to remind us that God is still at work in what appears to be a cultural wasteland; ergo, we should not give up on our modern society entirely.

Not to be outdone, our own Sister Maria Philomena, longtime conference speaker and director of the Saint

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Augustine Institute of Wisdom, in her talk entitled, “Legacy of Sanctity: Lives that Changed the Course of History”, showed us how important one person can be. As Brother Francis said, none of us would have the faith today if it hadn’t been handed down to us in a line that goes back to the apostles. Often this occurs in a family setting, but not always.

In the evangelization of all of the nations of Europe, there were certain notables who played a key part. With Sister’s detailed knowledge of history, she showed this in depth, including discussions of the Burgundian St. Clotilde, known as the mother of the Franks, the Bohemian King, St. Wenceslas, St. Adelbert of Prague and others, all of whom played a role in the conversion of the European peoples who formed Christendom. Getting a bit personal, Sister showed how we can each trace our having the faith to some of these historical figures. What we should bring out of her presentation is that the faith is handed down one person at a time. We should never forget this, as the salvation of future generations depends on the faith being passed down from us or others living today.

Following Sister Maria Philomena was John Sharpe, a speaker well known to regular conference attendees. In his memorable contribution entitled, “Redeeming the Time, Living the Liturgy through the Music of St. Gregory”, Sharpe reminded us of the importance of Gregorian Chant and singing in the development of the liturgy. Relying upon the writings of Dom Guéranger and many other well known Catholic figures, Sharpe’s thesis is that the liturgy was made to be sung, and that the music of the sung liturgy, including the Divine Office, must be our pop culture. His stated goal of

enkindling interest in the liturgy should be taken to heart by all serious Catholics.

Longtime friend of Saint Benedict Center, C. Joseph Doyle (aka Joe Doyle), of the Catholic Action League of Massachusetts, provided an informative and encouraging exposition on the triumph of tradition in today’s Catholic Church. Despite an increase in attacks upon traditional Catholics under the current pontificate, tradition seems to be growing, and Joe gave signs of this in his talk. While Pope Benedict XVI made us respectable again, Pope Francis has, ironically, made us popular. Amid the attrition elsewhere in the Church, tradition seems to be the only segment of the Church that is growing. Traditionalists have won over the *Novus Ordo* conservatives, and prominent celebrity converts seem to be coming to tradition.

Joe had numbers and statistics to back up his claims, and they all go to show that while the battle for the soul of the Church is still ongoing, it appears that authentic Catholicism is winning the battle.

As is customary, the conference concluded with a panel discussion in which the speakers were asked questions. The number and variety of the questions reflected the interest aroused in the audience, and allowed each of the speakers to provide additional detail specific to his or her own talk, and relevant to the conference theme.

In short, this conference, like all of the previous St. Benedict Center Conferences, provided a wealth of information along with a weekend of fellowship, and was well worth attending. ■

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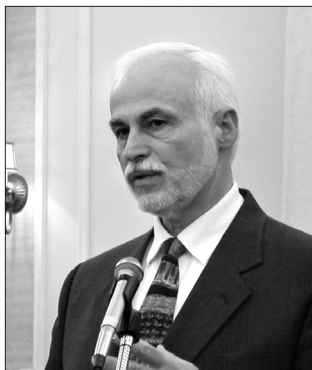
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Brother Lawrence, M.I.C.M., Tert.

the love of wisdom and has no further aim than to learn what is truth, and to discover reality, both material and immaterial.

Now, while it is not useful in the ordinary sense, the study of philosophy provides something that no other field can provide — wisdom, which Brother Francis defined as *the most perfect knowledge of the most important truths, in the right order of emphasis, accompanied by a total, permanent disposition to live accordingly*. If we innocently and with determination pursue the truth, *philosophia perennis* will lead us to wisdom, and that is the goal.

Philosophy provides something that cannot be gotten anywhere else: a floodlight, which allows us to see reality the way it is, to view the world, the universe, with a secure metaphysical outlook, without the blinders or prejudices of modern error.

While we are subjected to the swirl of information around us in the various media — print, electronic, digital, etc. — philosophy helps us make sense of it all and saves time and energy by helping us to know what is relevant to our most important purpose, the salvation of our souls. It provides a sense of purpose, allowing us to grasp the intrinsic value of God’s Creation and helping us to put order in our lives in relation to this purpose, the end in view.

Philosophy helps us to determine the truth when it is presented and to distinguish it from error. This it does by helping us to recognize the major premises behind statements we encounter in news articles, those made by teachers in class, or those made on television and the internet. For example, the moment one comes across this in the description of a so-called Catholic parish church, “The multiracial parish in the African American tradition...,” one can see that concern for race has replaced the Church’s actual mission in the mind of the writer. Or this from the new head of the National Institutes of Health — “Equity will guide my approach to leading the NIH” — which tells us that research will no longer be guided by the goal of discovering the truth about health.

Philosophy’s Floodlight allowed me to read a very good book recently, *Ideas Have Consequences* by Richard Weaver, in which many accurate and interesting ideas were presented in a pithy and entertaining manner, but the light of philosophy helped me avoid the several ideas which could have caused my thinking to go off track. It was as if I could hover over his work and see its entirety, including its strengths and shortcomings, all in clear relief.

In past articles I discussed why *philosophia perennis*, the true philosophy, is useless. It is not studied in order to do something else, such as the study of carpentry to build houses, plumbing to provide running water, or medicine to help people overcome disease. Philosophy is literally the love of wisdom and has no further aim than to learn what is truth, and to discover reality, both material and immaterial.

The author contends, correctly, that a falsified picture of the world is at the basis of much of the trouble with the modern culture. In his quest to find what is a bedrock idea which forms the basis for rational thought, he considers the “last metaphysical right” to be private property. He correctly states that it is necessary to base the non-material existence of ideas on the material world. Since it is difficult for most people to grasp the immaterial, he contends that it suffices to begin with the right to own property. “The idea of metaphysical right subsumes property, and it is this idea that was lost to view in man’s orientation away from transcendence.” And yet he considers himself to be a follower of Plato, who taught that the real things are the ideas, not the concrete realities themselves — which would include all that is meant by “private property” — so the Floodlight of true philosophy helped to make his confusion obvious.

When the author talks about “the great stereopticon” of radio, television and the movies, and how the media themselves filter the presentation of reality, shape our view of the world, and influence our thinking without our being aware of it, one easily sees how this same effect is amplified by the advent of the computer and Internet. The Floodlight allows me to consider how this happens, how the real world is not being apprehended directly by our senses, but has been modified significantly by an electronic medium and by the individuals who control what is presented by it.

If I am looking for something that is orthodox and uplifting in some media offering, the Floodlight helps me quickly to eliminate any that contain errors. Sometimes it is good to know that the author can be trusted, but even the best can make mistakes, so knowing the difference between one that is of a secondary nature and one that casts a pall on the entire work is important. For example, if I detect that the

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“the most perfect knowledge of  
the most important truths...”

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author confuses a phantasm (material sense experience) with an idea (an abstraction that is purely immaterial), I know in advance the author has made an error on such a fundamental level that the rest of the piece is likely to be tainted by it.

Recently, I read *Amusing Ourselves to Death* by Neil Postman, who makes an observation similar to Richard Weaver’s in his chapter on “the great stereopticon”: the same media that entertain us also filter and control so much of what we experience thanks to modern electronic devices such as television, radio, computers, the Internet and smart phones (though these last two were not invented when Postman wrote his book). The author makes no pretense that his book is metaphysical; it is more of a commentary on modern society. He contends that modern Americans are falling under the control of larger forces not because of “Big

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Brother” as in the book *1984* by George Orwell, but are instead being amused into submission by the controlled media as described by Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World*. My Floodlight helped me to learn some important ideas from the work, but to keep everything in balance, and not give it more weight than it deserved.

Finally, I came upon an article in *Advanced Science News* entitled “Materialism matters: The role of philosophy in science” by Kieran Schlegel-O’Brien, which states, “Materialism posits that the material world — matter — exists, and everything in the Universe, including consciousness, is made from or is a product of matter.” The article is a hodgepodge of musings, some of which are true, others of which are false. He is correct when he says, “Science and the scientific method are rooted in materialism.” But then he implies that the only alternative is *idealism* where there is no objective reality, to which he objects, and sets up a false dichotomy between materialism and idealism, as if there is nothing in between. The Floodlight of true philosophy easily exposes his problem: that the author does not have a clear under-

standing of the proper balance of the material and the immaterial, that he does not have a concept of *matter* and *form*, a grasp of the notion of *hylomorphism*, that every material being is composed of matter and form, and so he flounders in a whirl of ill-defined notions. The piece ends with the promise of another to follow that includes a discussion of Hegel’s dialectic, which I am quite sure will be to propose a type of dynamism, a state of continual flux, such as that proposed by the ancient Greek Philosopher, Heraclitus. If he continues down this path, I know he will never get anywhere (or at least not anywhere worth going), no matter how many additional articles he writes.

It makes no difference which ideas we are presented with, the Floodlight of Philosophy makes them understandable, keeps them in perspective, assigns them their proper ontological status, and helps us avoid falling into error. As Brother Francis said, with our Floodlight, we become like honey bees, that are able to extract the nectar from thistles and roses, while avoiding the thorns. ▪

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## A PRAYER FOR THE CONVERSION OF AMERICA

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

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

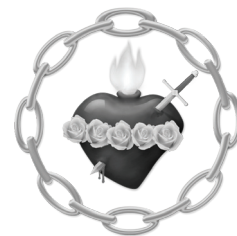
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*Ex Cathedra*: "We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff." (Pope Boniface VIII, the Bull *Unam Sanctam*, 1302).

## NOTES:

- Join us for the Chair of Unity Octave prayers January 18-25.  
[www.catholicism.org/chair-of-unity-octave.html](http://www.catholicism.org/chair-of-unity-octave.html)
- February 20: First day of 33-day preparation for those who wish to make or renew their Total Consecration on March 25.
- Save the date, our 2025 SBC Conference will be October 10 and 11.

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