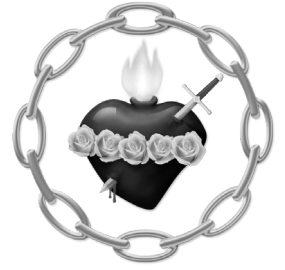


MANCIPIA

THE REPORT OF THE CRUSADE OF SAINT BENEDICT CENTER

September/October 2026



Our Lady of Ta' Pinu



Br. André Marie,
M.I.C.M., Prior

PRIOR'S COLUMN

TOO MUCH 'UNWORTHINESS' IN CATHOLICISM?

While engaged in my morning routine before High Mass one Sunday, someone handed me a question, hoping that I could include it in that day's Q&A session — part of our Sunday observance here at the SBC community in New Hampshire. On a small piece of paper was handwritten, "Is it possible to take the 'unworthiness' thing too far in the spiritual life?" After thinking for a bit, I came up with a negative answer to the question, but there is too much involved in this issue to leave it just at a simple "No."

If one were to read passages from good books on the interior life in isolation, especially books from the Counter-Reformation era, one could walk away with a lopsided notion of one's own unworthiness that works to the detriment of the spiritual life. For instance, Saint Louis Marie de Montfort encourages us, during the week of self-knowledge that forms part of his thirty-three-day preparation for Total Consecration, to look at ourselves "as nothing but snails, slugs, toads, swine, snakes, and goats."

Now, if one were to isolate that passage from the works of the great French Marian Apostle and build a spirituality around it alone — as some Protestants form a sect based upon a single verse from the Bible (e.g., snake-handling Pentecostals in Appalachia from Mark 16:18) — one would have a spiritual starvation diet, and a toxic one at that. Thankfully, Saint Louis Marie himself does not leave it there — even if meditations on our lowliness, pondering especially what we have made ourselves by sin, have an important place in a solid spiritual life.

Today, we live in a time of heightened mental illness in society at large. The anti-Christian, *anti-human* death cult has made many lose their grip of what man is as a being created in the image and likeness of God. The materialism of the Enlightenment has climaxed in an atmosphere in which man has made himself god and thinks he can remake himself in any number of unnatural ways. Ironically but predictably, the end result of this monstrous dethroning of God has not been the elevation of man, but the denaturing and degrading of man. As a result we are, as a society, *mentally ill*. And, generally speaking, the first remedy one gives a mentally ill man is not to tell him how unworthy he is. Children that have been brought up in abusive homes have often been made to feel entirely unloved. Telling them how unworthy they are will likely have the effect of feeding into the noxious self-loathing that has been imposed upon them by abuse.

By the way, when I speak of mental illness, I am not, in principle, exculpating anyone from sin; for, in addition to

trauma, sin, which darkens the intellect and weakens the will, *also makes us mentally ill*. Either way, people thus afflicted need pity, compassion, correction, and love — even if that latter is sometimes in the form of "tough love."

When I say that "the 'unworthiness' thing" cannot be taken too far, but it can be misdirected or isolated from necessary countervailing thoughts, convictions, and virtues, what I mean is that our unworthiness is a fact that cannot be ignored or disregarded; we are, after all, not worthy to be elevated by divine grace into being a child of God and Mary, a brother or sister to Jesus Christ. To say that we are worthy of that gratuitous elevation is actually heresy (Pelagianism).

What are those "countervailing thoughts, convictions, and virtues" that must be integrated, along with a genuine humility, into a solid spiritual life?

For starters, we should list the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. By praying to God the beautiful "acts" of those virtues we all learned from our catechism, we will get at the root of the supernatural operations that God infused into us at Baptism. By acknowledging that Sanctifying Grace actually beautifies the soul (making it "graceful"), we reckon with a dogmatic truth of our religion that is unassailable. When we admit that we were born in Original Sin and were not worthy of that elevation, we state a similarly undeniable teaching of our Faith. Acknowledging that mortal sin shatters that divine elevation and that venial sin weakens it is also a frank embrace of reality — and the spiritual life cannot be solid if it is not firmly based upon reality.

We also must believe that Sanctifying Grace *gives us worth* in God's sight, making us "heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

What else helps to balance the necessary consideration of our own unworthiness?

Gratitude. To be truly thankful for divine gifts freely given and to live out that gratitude is the stuff of saints. Think of the Gospel episode of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19). One can hear the Sacred Heart ache when Our Lord says of the one man who bothered to thank Him, a Samaritan, "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger." This stranger, by contrast with the nine, "fell on his face before [Jesus'] feet, giving thanks."

Saint Felix of Cantalice, the Capuchin lay brother, was so habituated to thanking God that he was called "Brother *Deo Gratias*"! While I have no right to canonize my mentor, Brother Francis showed us by word and example the importance of gratitude, which I would say he practiced heroically.

Another necessary balance is confidence in God. Saul of Tarsus was of the same tribe of Benjamin that produced King

Saul, who was so tall that, “from his shoulders and upward he appeared above all the people” (1 Kings 9:2). As a sign of his self-confessed lowliness, the Christian Benjaminite changed his name from Saul to *Paulos* — meaning “little” or “small” in Greek. He also declared himself “not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:9). But the *little one* also wrote, concerning the challenges he faced, “I can do all these things in him who strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

Consider also the Syrophoenician woman of Mark 7:25-30. Note her behavior when Jesus rebuffed her as she besought Him for the relief of her possessed daughter: “It is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the dogs,” Jesus said to this Gentile lady. “But she answered and said to him: ‘Yea, Lord; for the whelps also eat under the table of the crumbs of the children’.” In the parallel passage in Saint Matthew (15:21-28), we are told two additional things: first, that the Apostles wanted to send her away, and second, when she gave the reply quoted above, Jesus praised her: “O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt” (Matt. 15:28). She humbly acknowledged her own unworthiness, picking up on Our Lord’s canine metaphor and repeating it, making herself a little dog begging under the table of her Jewish “masters.” She was humble, confident, and persevering, trying the patience of the Apostles but touching the Heart of God. Aware of her unworthiness, she prayed with great trust, and, like the Samaritan leper, “fell down at his feet” (Mark 7:25).

The Gospels are full of accounts of people who knew they were unworthy, but who were nonetheless faithful, hopeful, loving, grateful, and confident recipients of God’s gifts. Our Lady at the Annunciation, Saint Elizabeth at the Visitation, and Saint Simeon at the Presentation are three examples

from the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. Saint Peter, at the miraculous drought of fish, felt so unworthy that he said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8), but Jesus, stirring up the Fisherman’s confidence and courage, replied, “Fear not...” (Luke 5:10).

I would like to give the last word on this matter to the little French Carmelite that Pope Saint Pius X called “the greatest saint of modern times.”

Our own Sister Marie Gabrielle penned an article on Catholicism.org called “Theresian ‘Littleness’ — What Is It Really?” After giving various answers from approved authors, she quotes Msgr. Vernon Johnson: “For her, being little meant admitting what she really was.” Then, our own little Sister concludes by quoting the Little Flower herself, who said that *this* is what she means by “remaining a little child”:

It is to recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God as a little child expects everything from its father; it is to be disquieted about nothing.... To be little is not attributing to oneself the virtues that one practices, believing oneself capable of anything, but to recognize that God places this treasure in the hands of His little child to be used when necessary; but it remains always God’s treasure. Finally, it is not to become discouraged over one’s faults, for children fall often, but they are too little to hurt themselves very much.

That is a clear and balanced approach to the dilemma presented by my Sunday-morning questioner. Saint Thérèse knew she was unworthy, but that did not bother her a bit. Rather, it was an impetus for her to take in all the strength from God that only little children can receive.■

Email Brother André Marie at bam@catholicism.org.



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Sr. Marie Gabrielle, M.I.C.M.

CONVENT CORNER

THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN

As it is typically used, the term *Christian* can mean either of two things. Many people would equate it with *not Catholic*. A Christian — that is, a Protestant — would be one who claims to revere Sacred Scripture and accept the forgiveness and salvation offered him through the perfect

Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross; he believes in angels, grace, Heaven, and hell (usually); he recognizes the cosmos as God's creation, the devil as God's enemy, and this life as a place of temporary sojourn for God's elect.

A Christian in this first sense, though, is *not* a Catholic. He does *not* believe in showing any particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary or to the saints; he sees no point in honoring relics nor in praying for the deceased, nor in perpetuating the Sacrifice of Calvary through the Sacrifice of the Mass. He does not acknowledge Christ's Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament nor the authority of the Pope as the successor of St. Peter, nor, as a rule, the intrinsic necessity of Baptism for membership in the Mystical Body. He looks upon a great number of the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church as so many vain traditions of men, whereas he, as a Christian, professes to follow, simply and strictly, the Christ revealed to us in the Gospels.

That is precisely his error.

The Christ of the Gospels never intended His religion to be based on a written document. Instead, he founded a Church — that is, a divine-human organization having as its sole purpose the safeguarding and promulgating of His message of salvation until the end of time. Written documents, we all know, are subject to interpretation. Actually, they *require* interpretation, and, if interpreted poorly, inaccurately, or dishonestly, they can be made to have a meaning completely contrary to what their own authors intended. The founding fathers of the United States knew this, and so they set up the judicial branch of our government in order to interpret the Constitution in accordance with the American ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It was a wise move, humanly speaking.

Would Wisdom Incarnate have shown less forethought?

Our Divine Savior had need of neither people nor books to go about His work of *teaching all nations* (cf. Mt. 28:19) all the truths they must know and live by in order to reach their heavenly homeland. He could very easily have remained on earth after His Resurrection and traveled the globe working miracles to authenticate His claim to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

But He did not.

Christ left this task to men, appointing to His followers the glorious mission of being other Christs on earth. He ennobled them and enriched them with His own authority so that whoever heard and obeyed them would be hearing and obeying Him (cf. Luke 10:16). They were to *teach* the world all things whatsoever He had commanded them (cf. Mt. 28:20). Teach by speaking (cf. Rom. 10:17), teach by writing (cf. II Tim. 3:16), and — most important of all — teach by example.

Christianity based on Scripture alone, where each man is his own pope, his own authority, claiming to operate under the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, results in the thousands and thousands of "Christian" denominations we see in the world today.

Is this what Our Lord intended? That His followers should be arguing among themselves whether or not to baptize infants, whether or not contraception and sodomy are acceptable, moral practices, what are and are not the requirements for entrance into Heaven? How could this have been the Plan of our Teacher and Guide — that His own followers should be always at odds on such *critical* questions, left to fend for themselves, as it were, groping for truth within a mirkwood of contradictory opinions?

Thanks be to God, this was never Christ's intention.

What Our Lord left us, what the Apostles received from Him, and what His True Church has been protecting down through the centuries, is belief in one Lord — Whose standards and expectations do not change from denomination to denomination, era to era, culture to culture; one Faith — which can be known by hearing and humbly obeying those who possess authority to teach in Christ's name; and one Baptism — the outward sign by which men are visibly incorporated into one *visible*, unified body of true *followers of Christ*.

And so we arrive at the other, more accurate definition of *Christian*: *Christian* means *Catholic*.

Our Lord did choose, in His unfathomable wisdom, to leave weak, fallible men as the living custodians of His Gospel. They were commissioned to hand on intact those truths that they had received. Christ promised that He would be with them in the Blessed Sacrament until the end of time (cf. Mt. 28:20); He promised that the Holy Ghost would be guiding them both individually and corporately so as to ensure that no error would ever be taught *officially* by His Church. For, as all the early Christians believed — and all true Christians down through the centuries — Christ and His Church are one: the Head and its members, the Bridegroom and the Bride. The Church can no more deceive the world than Our Lord Himself can. Individual members may stray from the flock, yes. Shepherds themselves may betray her and do untold damage to souls. But it must needs be

that such scandals come, Our Lord said (cf. Mt. 18:7). The Truth will endure in spite of its enemies: What men *must* believe and how men *must* live in order to attain salvation will always be accessible to men of good will.

That God chose to employ men in the sacred task of transmitting His Truth to the world is a mystery. That God should have become a man at all is a deep, impenetrable mystery. But does it not stand to reason that we can only worship that which transcends reason? If God's ways were not above our ways, then *He would not be God*.

The bottom line here is that humility is the state proper to creaturehood, for *He made us and not we ourselves* (Ps. 99:3). It takes humility to accept the message of salvation from the mouth of a person who himself may not always live up to the ideals he professes. It takes humility to obey Church authorities when we see their lack of conformity with their Divine Leader; to confess our sins to our fellow sinners. It is the humility that says, "If this is how God wants it done, then who am I not to do it this way?" Children are supposed to be obedient, and we are supposed to be as little children (cf. Mt. 18:3).¹

This is why Catholics are the only valid claimants to the illustrious title of *Christian*: because Our Lord said, "If you

love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15), including such *hard* ones as, "Eat My Flesh and drink My Blood" (cf. Jn. 6:54). Catholics do. We do not understand it fully. But we believe it because it is what we have received from the authority that God Himself established (cf. Mt. 18:17). A true Christian looks on God as his Father, and thus, with childlike candor, is ever ready to follow His counsels, to honor His commands, to respect His wishes, and to imitate the example of perfection left us by His Son. Our eternal happiness depends on this humble, childlike docility: our willingness to imitate Our Lord, to cooperate with the grace by which He would perfect in us the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

Especially charity. For, ultimately, the world will know we are Christians *by our love* (cf. Jn. 13:35). ■

— Footnote —

1. In our day, there is a caricature of obedience that is used against faithful Catholics. We speak here of true Catholic obedience.

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- 1,485 Rosary Pamphlets
- ~6,300 People Met

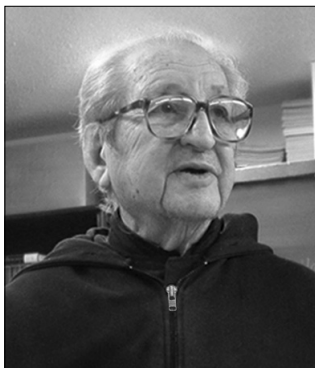
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Brother Francis, M.I.C.M.

FOUNDER'S COLUMN

THE HIERARCHY OF TRUTH: WHY DOGMA DEMANDS OUR LOYALTY

[Taken from his Sunday talks in 1980.]

A dogma is defined not when it begins to be believed, but when it begins to be doubted. It's when people start doubting it that the pope has to come and say, if you don't hold that, you are not a Catholic. Now

actually as a matter of fact, the definition of a dogma can be a great help because it can give us the precise terms in which it must be believed.

The Church always knew that the one true Church founded by our Lord Jesus Christ is infallible, and the only way the Church could be infallible is if the head of the Church, the supreme authority in the Church, is infallible. But since the definition of the dogma, we know how to distinguish between acts of the pope that must be given due respect, the respect due to the father of all Christendom, and acts that are binding for all time on the conscience of every baptized Christian.

To be a true Christian is to respect the infallible pronouncements of the popes and defend them. There is an order among the truths we know; nothing is more contrary to true wisdom than the leveling of truth.

I know the exact ratio between the circumference of a circle and the diameter of a circle, wonderful! Every person who has gone into mathematics can tell you that. Is that as important as that there are three persons in God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Of course not! Is my eternal salvation going to depend on the precise ratio of the circumference to the diameter of the circle? No!

When we establish a proper hierarchy of truths, the truths of religion defined *ex cathedra* stand at the top of that hierarchy. Loyalty to them comes first. The duty to uphold them is first, and from that duty certain indestructible liberties and rights arise. These become like a charter of liberty for the true children of God (Rom. 8:21), so that the papacy could never become a tyranny, because no living pope has absolute power. His first duty is to protect the *depositum fidei* — which includes his sacred obligation to believe, uphold, and defend what all the popes and ecumenical councils before him have defined.

The authority of the pope is not like the authority some of the leaders in our time have wanted to assume. He's not a Stalin, he's not a Hitler, he's not even a Roosevelt. The pope can't change one line in Holy Scripture, and he cannot contradict one infallible statement of all the 265 popes who reigned before him. So there are limits on his power, on his authority. And doctrine is always above discipline!

Now the ideal thing is when the discipline of the Church is at the service of doctrine and for the protection of doctrine. As long as that is not exactly so, ecclesiastical discipline can be easily abused and can even become despotic. Now there is a movement in the discipline of the Church in the general direction of putting discipline at the service of doctrine, but it hasn't arrived yet. It's just a little tendency in the right direction for which we thank God, and for whose consummate realization we pray. But we can't jump up and down and say we arrived because we haven't.

I reiterate, the ideal situation in the Church is when the discipline of the Church is protecting its dogma. But once there is a division and opposition between the two, the ecclesiastical authorities exercising discipline in this abusive fashion put themselves under a cloud. At that point, every baptized Catholic has a duty — as if the whole preservation of the faith depends on them — they have a duty to uphold the faith, the truth, and that's the thing by which we are judged when we face our Lord.

And doctrine is always above discipline!

When you go to judgment before our Lord, you don't say, well, you can't blame me because there were bad bishops or bad priests or bad teachers or theologians or bad *periti*. Our Lord doesn't listen to that. *How about you?* Saint Cecilia didn't have to write letters to the pope to find out what she should die for. She knew exactly what she should hold and defend. The faith has often been saved by one boy or one girl, one man or one woman, when everybody around them was betraying it. Wasn't that the story of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More in England? Did they have to go against every other bishop in England? The cowards who were their contemporaries pretended that suddenly they thought that the head of the Church should be Henry VIII, not the pope.

One of the sweetest stories I know is the story of the queen of Alfonso XIII of Spain, Queen Victoria Eugenie of Battenberg. She was English, and, as a child, was Anglican. When she married Alfonso XIII, she willingly became a Catholic. Her uncle, King Edward VII, was the reigning monarch of England when she became Queen of Spain. When the Anglicans would ask her why she had to change her religion to marry the king of Spain, she said in reply: *Well, I didn't change my religion because I married the king of Spain. I changed my religion because it suddenly occurred to me that it's much more likely that Pope Leo XIII is the head of the Church than that my uncle Eddie is! ...* ▪ (To listen to Brother's talks go to store.catholicism.org)

RECONQUEST†

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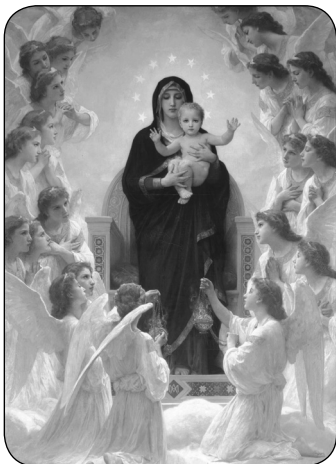
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Twenty-ninth Annual Saint Benedict Center Conference

“Oases of Sanity in the 21st Century”

Friday, October 9 — Saint Abraham

8:45 Breakfast

9:30 Registration opens

10:00 Brother André Marie’s Opening Remarks

10:30 John Sharpe **‘Three’ Must Be a ‘Thing’: The Catholic Third Position of the 1930s as both Oasis of Sanity and Basis for Action**

12:00 Angelus / Lunch

1:30 Sister Marie Gabrielle, M.I.C.M. **Fortes in Fide: St. Benedict Center as an Oasis of Sanity in the Heart of Traditional Catholicism**

3:00 Jeb Smith

4:30 Charles Coulombe **Building Fortresses in Enemy Territory**

6:00 Dinner

Saturday, October 10 — Saint Francis Borgia

8:45 Breakfast

9:45 Br. André Marie, MICM **The Catholic Sacramental Economy: Oasis of Salvation**

11:15 Sister Maria Philomena, MICM **Making the Family an Oasis of Sanity**

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

12:30 Angelus / Lunch

2:00 Mike Church **On-Air**

4:00 Mr. C. Joseph Doyle **The Traditional Mass: An Oasis of Catholicity in a Desert of Modernism**

After Doyle’s talk: Brothers and Sisters singing Polyphony

6:00 Dinner

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

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For lodging information go to the link above. All conference meals—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—are catered; while Friday’s dinner menu varies, Saturday’s dinner always feature steak.

To complement our meals, we are pleased to provide wine and our own homemade beer served on tap.

As a special thank you for attending, all registrants are eligible for an exclusive **50% discount** on the full set of conference audio or video recordings on flash drive. You may pre-order your set in person using the sign-up sheet available at our conference, or place your order online using the code we will send you after registering.



Br. John Marie Vianey, MICM,
Tert.

PREFECT'S COLUMN

CONFESSIONS OF A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

Brother André Marie asked me to write a little something about my career as a private investigator and how I strove to connect my work to my Catholic Faith. He thought it might make for interesting reading and encouragement for others to try to

bring the Faith more actively into their professional lives.

Becoming a private investigator seemed natural considering my background in law enforcement, military service (US Navy), the insurance business, and the law. While still in law school, I became a private investigator for a PI agency. Later, I started my own outfit, which became a family business: Five of my relatives became licensed investigators; my wife and our oldest daughter worked in our office as clerk-secretaries; my two sons, one son-in-law and three friends handled surveillance investigations. The son-in-law became a top-notch surveillance man. At one time, I had a dozen investigators.

It often happened that my clerk-secretaries (wife and daughter) would accidentally overhear my conversations with potential clients in our office. Remember that, please.

While my career as an investigator is not the kind of thing that Netflix would likely turn into its next smash-hit series — a lot of the job is just banal and humdrum — there were certainly times when I was brought to face with life's existential questions, even in a dramatic way. Some cases involved the very non-theoretical "problem of evil" as manifest in tragic, avoidable deaths — as well as the kind of gut-wrenching, raw emotion evoked by tragedy. And yes, there was a bit of blood and gore on occasion.

Before I had my own business, I worked for a major insurance carrier as their "Large and Commercial Account Senior Adjuster," which grandiloquent title meant that I handled the most serious cases. One of these was the case of a nineteen-year-old former college student, who died at an off-campus frat house in Massachusetts due to a hazing incident. (His status as a "former" student added a layer of curiosity to the case.) The young man was forced to consume a large amount of food and wine, repeatedly, alternated with plunges in an ice-water bath. The medical examiner discovered that the victim had a blood-alcohol level of 0.48 when he died after drinking what one report said amounted to more than a gallon of wine. Even in the comparatively lax standards of 1984, that was almost five times the legal limit to establish a DUI charge in the Bay State.

I had an excellent law firm handling the case. Sever-

al parties were sued. As we grew closer to the trial, the pressure increased.

In the end, it seemed that money was not what the family desired — good for them; no amount could bring back their son. What they were really seeking was to get an anti-hazing law passed in Massachusetts, which, thank God, was successfully accomplished thanks to the efforts of many of those involved.

Sometimes a deadly sin can be deadly in more ways than one. In this case, it was gluttony and its species, drunkenness that killed the body. I leave the prognosis of the soul in better Hands.

It was cases like this that led me to pray the Rosary in my comings and goings around our area of operations. What started as a coping mechanism became a means of offering prayers for those involved in these tragedies.

Very often, in the process of civil and criminal investigations, written or recorded statements are required. Yours truly investigated a heart-breaking case of the death of a young boy at one of the most dangerous intersections in Massachusetts.

A tractor-trailer was stopped at a traffic light. Two young brothers were walking on the sidewalk about to cross the street. The younger was on his bicycle, not riding it, but seated so that he could move the bike without pedaling. His older brother was only a few feet behind him.

The light had already turned green and the tractor-trailer began to move slowly ahead while the boy on his bike attempted a left turn directly in front of the truck's passenger side. Because of the particular design of the truck, the child was in the driver's blind spot. The result was horrible; the boy died at the scene, and his older brother saw the entire gory spectacle. I will spare you the details.

The company that insured the truck hired our agency.

The next three days had me at the scene, taking measurements, shooting photos, canvassing for witnesses — and praying for the little one and his family. This was a big case, and the insurance carrier wanted to make sure it was thoroughly and immediately investigated, which had me in contact with the family about forty-eight hours after the incident. After I gently reached out to the grieving father, he agreed to an interview.

My assignment was to take the surviving brother's statement in the presence of the parents, and then take the driver's statement. I took the boy's lengthy statement at the family's kitchen table with another sibling and the parents. The interview and statement took more than an hour. The

family, who identified as Christian, were very calm. By the end of the statement, everyone in the room was crying. Such a thing can only be borne well with prayer; seriously, it's amazing how God makes a spiritual work of mercy a necessity in some cases.

After dealing with the grieving family, I then contacted the driver and went to his house in New Hampshire. About a block away from the driver's home, I happened to notice a man near a pond. He was very still, and seemed depressed. It turned out he was the driver. Again, I took a hand-written statement, this time over a period of almost two hours, in front of the man's wife. To add to the emotional load, during the interview, I learned that the driver had just been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. This time, I was actually crying with the man and his wife. I don't believe I thought of it at the time, but such instances provide us with the opportunity to practice the admonition of Saint Paul: "Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). The impulses of natural sympathy can be supernaturalized.

I ended up recommending that the company pay the family, even though the driver was not to blame because the child was in his blind spot.

Divorce cases I avoided like the plague in my business, unless there was an allegation of abuse. While most of our investigations were for attorneys and insurance companies, on several occasions I received calls from people who wished me to follow and investigate their spouses. I would listen to their request and their reasons, but, as a matter of policy, I did not accept cases that might result in the destruction of a family.

Every time these calls came in, I spent some time to understand what happened. In every case — save for one — I began with the simple question "Have you spoken about these concerns with your spouse?" *Amazingly, not once had the issues ever been addressed with the spouse.*

Invariably, I would also ask if they were Catholic. That question was usually met with an awkward, silent interlude. If the response was in the affirmative, I then inquired if they had spoken to their parish priest. *Not one had ever done so.* These interviews sometimes brought tears to the would-be clients — and not only the women.

Believe it or not, I used the same technique with non-Catholics. Most had not attended services for some time. With the non-Catholics, I would ask if they ever were Catholic and, if so, why did they leave the Church. I would encourage them to speak with a priest and to consider that embracing the Catholic faith might well solve their marital

problems. (This is the joy of having your own company: You won't get fired for pulling a Catholic stunt like this!)

Sometimes, I would spend a long time trying to convince them that they had a better chance of saving their marriage with my suggestions than with hiring an investigator. Some called back to say they appreciated the interview and were following my advice.

In that one case that I did not ask, "the simple question," there was a credible allegation of child abuse. The innocent spouse had informed the police, so our role was limited to surveillance, and ended quickly.

For a time, I was licensed to investigate cases in two, and occasionally three states. I had different business telephone numbers for each state. One day, I spent a great deal of time with a woman who had called my New Hampshire number to discuss a trouble-with-the-spouse case. I thought she agreed to my counseling, but five minutes later, she called my Massachusetts number not knowing she was calling the same business! There was another opportunity to pray.

Sometimes a deadly sin can be deadly in more ways than one.

Remember I mentioned that my clerk-secretary wife and daughter sometimes overheard my side of these conversations in the office? After hearing me attempting to turn away several of these marriage cases, my daughter said, "Dad! You're an investigator, not a priest!" Of course, she was right, but *I am Catholic*, which means, where possible, I should try to bring those suffering souls to, or back to, the one true Church, outside of which there is no salvation.

Years ago, Brother André Marie providentially overheard one of the above conversations when he happened to be at my house for something (at the time, I had a home office in Richmond). This is what led him to suggest this column to me when I asked him for ideas.

In each of these cases, being a practicing Catholic and having access to the beautiful prayers the Church has given us — especially the Rosary — got my team and me through. I hope you find something useful in these accounts. ■

Email Brother John Marie Vianney at toprefect@catholicism.org.



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

ISSUES IN APOLOGETICS: NEVER GIVE UP

Everyone engaged in evangelism has run into those people who seem like a total waste of time; someone seemingly so anti-Catholic or just so uninterested in God that it seems an absolutely pointless waste of time to continue the discussion. One of these would be Alphonse Ratisbonne, an obstinate Jew who sneered at Catholicism

until presented with a Miraculous Medal. Another might be the better-known St. Dismas, one of the two thieves crucified with our Lord and referenced in Luke 23. While known as the Good Thief (there was even a movie about him called “The Hoodlum Saint”), in all likelihood he was not merely a mere thief, but rather a highway robber with a lot of blood on his hands. Yet, St. Luke informs us that while on the cross next to our Lord, one of the thieves continued to blaspheme, while the man we now know as St. Dismas recognized his guilt and asked for forgiveness. For this he was rewarded with the words of Our Lord, “Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

For our purposes here, it is important that we realize that a person’s initial reaction to our sharing the faith is not necessarily his final response; even if he should seem like a lost cause, you and I can never determine that. Here is an example of one of the most unlikely converts in American history, one that almost everyone would have given up on, yet who came to Christ in the last moments of his life. This fact, although not his life prior to his conversion, should be an inspiration to us all and a reminder that when planting seeds of evangelism, the rockiest ground can become fertile.

Amid the graves of well-known Catholic celebrities such as James Cagney and Babe Ruth in Gate of Heaven Cemetery (a Catholic cemetery in Hawthorne, New York), there is a grave with the name Arthur S. Flegenheimer. While most people won’t recognize the name, that is because he used an alias, and is better known to the public as Dutch Schultz.

Flegenheimer, the man known as Dutch Schultz, was born in 1901 and met his untimely demise in 1935. He was one of the best known and most infamous gangsters in American history. He was a bootlegger, leader of a gang, and a vicious killer. In the 1930’s, New York prosecutor Thomas Dewey (later New York governor and 1948 Republican presidential nominee) was mounting a relentless attack on organized crime. He was after the heads of the Mafia’s five families, such as Lucky Luciano, whom he convicted. Accordingly, the ruling commission of the Mafia held a meeting to determine the appropriate course of action. Schultz attended, and told them that he was going to kill Dewey. Cooler heads prevailed, knowing that killing a prominent prosecutor would backfire and bring about increased heat and prosecution.

When Schultz stomped out, stating that he would kill Dewey anyway, the other mob leaders knew that he meant it and decided that he had to be eliminated. Thus, they sent the order to “Kill the Dutchman” out to Murder Inc. Accordingly on October 23, 1935, Schultz and three associates were gunned down in a restaurant in Newark, New Jersey.

Ordinarily, the story would end there; but the point of this article is not to tell an interesting gangster story. When Schultz was brought into the emergency room he asked to see a priest. The call went out to Reverend Cornelius McNerney, a local parish priest and onetime prison chaplain. Father McNerney met with Schultz and determined that he was sincere, repentant, and wanted to be baptized.¹ This was done and Schultz died the next day, after receiving Extreme Unction. Four days later his funeral service was held in a local Catholic Church, and he was buried in Gate of Heaven Cemetery.

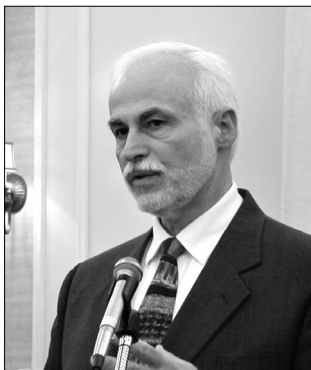
As might be expected, because Dutch was well-known as a murderous gangster, this caused quite an uproar. The diocesan officials, however, stood their ground. According to a bio by Gail Campbell Schulte,² the priest who took care of Schulte on his deathbed and remained with him till he died, Father McNerney “reminded people that three crosses stood on Calvary, and on one hung a penitent thief destined for paradise.” This does not prove that the infamous gangster saved his soul, but it is a lesson in both God’s mercy and the confidence we ought to have in His sacraments.

There is a lot to be learned from this, but I would like to focus on one point. First, no one is beyond salvation; God can save anyone, and in this case, He did (as far as we know). But more importantly, if Dutch Schultz could convert, anyone can. Where we need to apply this is in remembering that when we talk to others about the faith, even though we see no encouraging results, we never really know if what we have said has sunk in. Apparently in Schultz’s case, he had learned about Our Lord from some person or some other source, and had learned enough to realize that coming into the Catholic Church through repentance and Baptism were what he needed to save his soul. Even if the person who planted that seed never saw any results, the results showed up when the chips were down, on the Dutchman’s deathbed, which is really when it counts.

And the moral of the story is that we must never give up on any person, no matter how obstinate he is. If God could save Dutch Schultz, He can save anyone. ■

1. Born of German Jewish immigrants, Herman and Emma Flegenheimer, Dutch Schultz had never been baptized, which makes his request for a priest all the more striking. If he had been an Italian mafioso, we might be tempted to assign his request for a priest to “cultural” or even “superstitious” reasons.

2. At findagrave.com



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

A POINT OF ETHICS — HUMAN ACTS CAST A LONG SHADOW

“With the conviction that we have one life to live and that we are destined to live forever, we realize the preciousness of every act, of every moment. Everything we do is an opportunity that, once lost, is gone forever. It will never come again. We will have another day, but today is an opportunity wasted. If we

live forever, every act we perform casts a long, long shadow.” — Brother Francis

For those who are familiar with the lectures given by Brother Francis, you have heard him say more than once that “human acts cast a long shadow.” Unfortunately, I believe that we too often nod our heads and affirm that “sounds good” and move on to something else. I want to spend a little time considering this thought, the nuances of which I will not exhaust in this essay.

First, we must look at what is a “human act.” It is one in which a person engages his intellect and will fully. It is not some inadvertent action that is not even noticed by the person doing it. The person knows he is doing it and does it deliberately. Intellect and will are the two faculties which reach beyond our merely material existence, and reflect our spiritual nature. Every act that fully engages our spiritual powers extends into the spiritual realm. Something we do here has consequences not only in this life but in the one hereafter.

Second, what is a “shadow?” The Cambridge dictionary defines *shadow* as “an area of darkness where people and things cannot be seen.” Brother is telling us that our actions have effects in areas that we cannot foresee, on which we can only speculate. What are some of those areas?

We immediately see that our actions will affect our own existence after we pass from this life into the next. That itself is an eternal shadow. By our acts, and our cooperation with God’s grace, or failure to do so, we will determine whether our souls

will enter a state of eternal bliss or one of eternal damnation.

Other definitions of *shadow* from the Merriam Webster dictionary include: “a small degree or portion,” “an inseparable companion or follower,” “a pervasive and dominant influence,” “a reflected image,” “an imperfect and faint representation,” “a source of gloom or unhappiness,” “a state of ignominy or obscurity.” In an older dictionary, definitions include: “that which follows inseparably,” “obscurity or haze,” “protection,” “a premonition.” There are many nuances to the word, and I am certain Brother would want us to consider them all.

Human acts are like the familiar analogy of a stone thrown into a body of calm water. The ripples flow outward in all directions indiscriminately. Some may be intended, some may not be. Some flow unimpeded to the other side of the pond, but some from the same stone could interfere with one’s fishing line.

What are some examples of human acts that have cast long shadows that we can recognize? To begin with, Adam and Eve’s original sin. It was a human act that has cast its shadow over each and every human being that came after them. It closed the door of Heaven to themselves and all their progeny. Of course, Noah’s obedience to God’s command to build an ark to save a remnant of humanity — when the rest of mankind was headed for destruction — was another with a very long shadow, as was Abraham’s obedience to God’s commands. Without Abraham’s act, the true faith as we know it would not have been.

When we consider original sin, and Noah’s and Abraham’s decisions to follow God’s will, we are immediately reminded of Our Lady’s *fiat* when she agreed to become the Mother to Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Here is another human act whose shadow could touch every one of us, if our own human acts will allow it to.

Praying for someone. There’s a human act that can bridge not only the gap between people, but can call down grace for another to make it possible for him to save his soul, if he cooperates with the graces you are requesting for him. One shadow could assist another to enjoy eternal happiness.



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One thing that is true of all of us is that our will, by nature, only chooses one thing — the good, i.e., *that which it appears will make us happy*. It is programmed for that one thing alone — happiness. The same is true for our own acts: we always act to secure our own happiness, even if we are choosing something that is against our nature or harmful to us. It's in this quest for happiness that our acts cast their shadows. All creatures aim at their own perfection, but only humans can exercise their free will and either reach that perfection or something less. In addition, our true perfection is beyond the material world, and it is something we can miss completely — more long shadows of our acts.

Some other examples of long shadows we may not consider frequently enough: in addition to the long-lasting effects on our own soul, it is good to consider the effects our actions have on others, on immediate family members, on future generations. For example, a father who takes drugs or drinks too much: does he think of the shadow he will cast on his progeny? Or a mother who does the same. How could this affect the entire life of her

children, as well as those encountered by them?

What about acts that are done in private? Do those cast long shadows also? We know that all human acts have a moral component. They can be good, neutral, or sinful, including those done in private. That fact alone casts its shadow, and if one of them places us in a state of mortal sin before we die, our suffering for all eternity will be part of it.

Brother Francis wanted us to think about things such as this. I am merely suggesting some of my thoughts about his deep and provocative statement. I hope you will expand on these considerations and do as Brother suggested many times, to “dig them in,” make them a part of us, so they influence not only our thought, but our own human acts. ■

THE CHALLENGE OF FAITH BY BR. FRANCIS MALUF M.I.C.M.

Faith

1. God created precisely the kind of world in which the act of faith is possible; namely, a world in which God can be sought and found, but also one in which God can be ignored.

2. From our point of view, it is wonderful that God can be found; from God's point of view, it is wonderful that God can hide. It is like hiding a powerful light in a dark room.

3. If God's evidence were equal to His reality, there would be neither love nor merit in our faith.

4. Faith is the knowledge facet of our participation in the divine nature, in our becoming children of God. We know with God's mind realities not connatural to ours: this is what it means to have the Faith.

5. Faith is prefigured by the dark cloud which illumined the night. (Ex. 14:20) It is dark (but that is because it is so far above our nature) and yet it is the only light in the darkness of this life.

6. It is only through faith that we know the cause and meaning of all.

7. Faith is man's first step towards his divine destiny (the Beatific Vision). Failing to take that step is the beginning of the eternal frustration of a life.

The Day

1. From the first day of creation the same pattern of day has been repeated. Every entity in existence plays its part in making a day, but the purpose of the day is human.

2. Within the framework of the day every event in history took place, and especially the central and most important event: the work of salvation.

3. Every new day is a fresh beginning, as if God wipes out the past by a good night's sleep and invites us to begin again.

4. Every day could be our last day, and one day is going to be just that.

5. The very monotony of the day's pattern is a challenge to our spirituality, our creativeness, our originality, (which is the signature of person). No one day is exactly like another; no one man's day is like any other man's day. We make our own days as we make our own lives.

6. Every day is a figure of all life and of all time; but the ever repeated cycle of the day is a figure of eternity.

7. Our Lord wants us to be concerned only with today: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This is the day of salvation. Am I ready for eternity today?

8. The past and the future are the devil's tools. God is the Eternal Now.

Order

1. The heart of wisdom is the appreciation of order: putting first things first.

2. The mission of religious life is the restoration of order.

3. God created the world for man, and man for salvation: all order serves this one end, the salvation of man.

4. Saint Teresa of Avila commenting on the text, "Thou hast set him over the works of thy hands: Thou has subjected all things under his feet" (Ps. 8: 7-8), says that this is true principally of the saints, because most men subject themselves to the things of this world. Only the saints are truly the lords of creation.

5. Peace is the tranquility of order; beauty is its splendor.

6. Order is the perfect disposition of means to the end. Only those who know the true end can work for order. He who knows not the true doctrines of salvation is like a captain of a ship who does not know the destination of his journey.

7. The only first principle of order is the Apostles' Creed; the best prayer for order is the Our Father; the best grasp of the means for order is the Hail Mary; the triumphant shout of order is the Hail Holy Queen.

Purity

1. Purity is promised the highest reward: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8)

2. Purity must spring from the heart, and must pervade every thought, act, or movement.

3. Modesty is the external manifestation of the purity of heart and mind.

4. The beauty of modesty is unforgettable: the greatest spiritual force on earth.

5. The attributes of purity: it is loving, tender, loyal, humble, ardent, and, above all, ferocious — terrible as an army set in array.

6. Purity converted kingdoms and empires, exalted warfare to the sublime status of chivalry, transformed a family, elevated womanhood, and sanctified the earth by the religious vow of virginity.

7. The issues of purity are the personal concern of our Lady: for it is she who made virginity the heart of religion. It is primarily under that aspect that her arch-enemy, Lucifer, studies how to spread in the world the cult of impurity.

8. The triumph of purity is really the victory of the flesh showing the heights to which it can be raised through virtue and grace; it is the greatest achievement of our human nature.



EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS

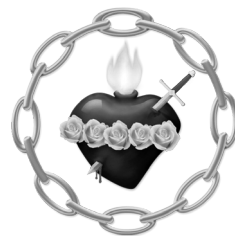
Ex Cathedra: “There is but one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all is saved” (Pope Innocent III, Fourth Lateran Council, 1215).

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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