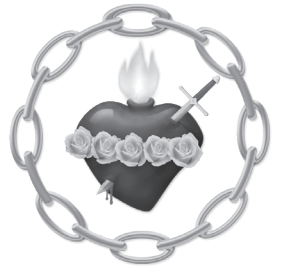


MANCIPIA

THE REPORT OF THE CRUSADE OF SAINT BENEDICT CENTER

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Br. André Marie,
M.I.C.M., Prior

PRIOR'S COLUMN KNOWLEDGE AND MYSTERY

When I was first studying philosophy, I overheard a conversation between an eccentric old philosophy professor and one of the other seminarians. It fascinated me. This old gent said that Our Lord defended the study of philosophy in the Gospels on that occasion when the disciples of Saint John the Baptist came to ask Him if He were the Christ:

“And John called to him two of his disciples, and sent them to Jesus, saying: Art thou he that art to come; or look we for another? ... (And in that same hour, he cured many of their diseases, and hurts, and evil spirits: and to many that were blind he gave sight.) And answering, he said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the gospel is preached: And blessed is he whosoever shall not be scandalized in me” (Luke 7:19-23).

By deductive reasoning from the sensible data they perceived, John's disciples would judge — as Jesus encouraged them to — that the words of Isaias were being fulfilled, from which they might rightly conclude that Jesus was the Messiah. Rather than give them a Yes or a No, Jesus forced them to think.

I greatly valued the insight I got from overhearing that conversation in the refectory.

If Our Lord was giving us the ingredients we need to defend the study of philosophy — or at least of logic — He was more immediately showing His value for the faculties with which we ply that art. Without sense knowledge (“what you have heard and seen”), the inner senses of imagination and memory, and the spiritual faculty of the intellect, what Jesus tells the disciples of John is utterly meaningless.

The Son of God makes it clear that our eyes and ears work. By them — along with our other senses — we know reality; and when we conform ourselves to that reality, we walk in the truth. Further, recalling that Jesus cites the supernaturally revealed text of Isaias, we may reason with the data of revelation *and* with naturally acquired knowledge at the same time — something properly called theology. The

result is knowledge of God and of divine things.

In contrast to the confidence that the Author of human nature shows in man's knowing faculties, stand modern philosophers like Berkeley, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, etc. (their name is Legion), who deny, in whole or in part, man's capacity to know reality as it is. To use Kant's language, we can only know the *phenomenon* (our perception of a thing), but not the *noumenon* (what really exists — in German, *das Ding an sich*: the thing in itself).



Saint John the Baptist

In brief, modern epistemology, the theory of knowledge, is very wrong-headed.

We orthodox Christians are not nominalists, who say that ideas are merely names we give to things, names which do not correspond to reality and the natures of things. Neither are we idealists, who seal up reality in some remote heaven of ideas which keeps them inaccessible to our intellects. We are classical realists, who believe that there is a reality, that we can know it, and that we can speak about it intelligently (and *intelligibly*) to others.

But to say that we can have an adequate knowledge of reality is not to posit that our grasp of reality is total or complete. Only God fully comprehends reality. For us, there are many unknowns, and there are many mysteries, even in the natural order.

What is a mystery?

Coming from the Greek word, *μυστήριον* (*musterion*), the word means a hidden thing, a secret. In ancient pagan religions, a mystery was something that a new member of the sect had to be initiated into through rituals. New Testament authors use the same Greek word to speak of God's hidden counsels that He has revealed to us: “Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, neither of the princes of this world that come to nought; But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory” (I Cor. 2:2-7).

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* further explains:

In conformity with the usage of the inspired writers of the New Testament, theologians give the name *mystery* to revealed truths that surpass the powers of natural reason. Mystery, therefore, in its strict theological sense is not synonymous with the incomprehensible, since all that we know is incomprehensible, i.e., not adequately comprehensible as to its inner being; nor

with the unknowable, since many things merely natural are accidentally unknowable, on account of their inaccessibility, e.g., things that are future, remote, or hidden. In its strict sense a mystery is a supernatural truth, one that of its very nature lies above the finite intelligence.

Theologians distinguish two classes of supernatural mysteries: the *absolute* (or *theological*) and the *relative*. An *absolute* mystery is a truth whose existence or possibility could not be discovered by a creature, and whose essence (inner substantial being) can be expressed by the finite mind only in terms of analogy, e.g., the Trinity. A *relative* mystery is a truth whose innermost nature alone (e.g., many of the Divine attributes), or whose existence alone (e.g., the positive ceremonial precepts of the Old Law), exceeds the natural knowing power of the creature.

That there exist supernatural and even natural mysteries we cannot comprehend ought to keep us humble and full of wonder. It should make us, in other words, like little children, which Someone has said is a rather good thing to do. (cf. Matt.18:3)

The same Vatican Council (the first of that name) that vigorously defended man's natural capacity to know truth — including the existence of God — by the use of his reason,

also anathematized those who said that all the truths of the Faith are naturally knowable.

A supernaturally revealed mystery is not an oxymoron, a brain-teaser, or a conundrum. It is a “hidden thing,” to be sure, but a thing about which we may certainly know something. Otherwise, the Word of God Himself got it wrong when He said: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

The Catholic religion and its notion of revelation is not gnostic. Ours is not an esoteric mystery cult. We know truths that have been revealed as part of a *public* revelation, one accessible to all of good will. Certain things we know absolutely and with great clarity. Certain other things lie beyond our knowledge. Where the mystics, the saints, grow in knowledge of Divine truth by their holiness is not in the realm of doctrine or theoretical knowledge. They grow, rather, in experimental knowledge of God (or, technically, *quasi*-experimental knowledge). By the ascetical and mystical life of prayer, contemplation, and conformity to God's Will, they go beyond the dogmatic utterance and delight in its inner essence. They “taste, and see that the Lord is sweet” (Ps. 33:9). ■

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Sr. Marie Thérèse, M.I.C.M.,
Prioress

CONVENT CORNER A WALNUT GROVE

One fine sunny day last week, Brother André Marie spied me sitting outside on the steps in the beautiful weather, racking my brains while trying to write this article. With evident experience in the matter, he diagnosed me with an acute case of writer's block. He then

prescribed that I walk in the woods to gain inspiration. So, later, I did! The "block" thus removed, my thoughts freely transported me to long ago and far away....in Wisconsin.

Dear Reader, I think it is important to add here that I grew up in an area of rolling fields in Wisconsin where a tree was something of value; where people actually spent money and time to plant and care for trees. I now live in a heavily wooded area in New Hampshire, where most trees plant themselves and gradually become a nuisance and a danger. The main arboreal discussions are about how to rid the land of trees (for building or just for sunshine) or turn the largest trees into firewood. Here, most large trees are not things to save, but to utilize...before they drop their damaging branches on cars, buildings or power lines. Saplings...well, they are just young troublemakers which too quickly grow into choking tangles of arboreal adolescents.

Forgive me, but I am still getting over the culture shock! I must confess, however, that I enjoy living in a house and do not shed many tears over the trees that had to be cut in order to build it here. I also have to say that I am very grateful that one of these majestic beauties hasn't yet dropped its several tons of bulk through our house in a wind or ice storm. And so, I do understand that those born and raised in similar northern jungles may not immediately appreciate this article.

All that said, I want to consider a time when it was common for a man, especially one newly married, proudly to plant trees on his property, making a statement that he, like the trees, was planning to "put down roots." The twigs he so laboriously bedded in the loam were labeled

"apple," "cherry," "walnut" and "pecan." Those fruits and nuts would not even begin to appear for several years. He expected that he and his family would still be there to taste the yield of those trees for generations to come.

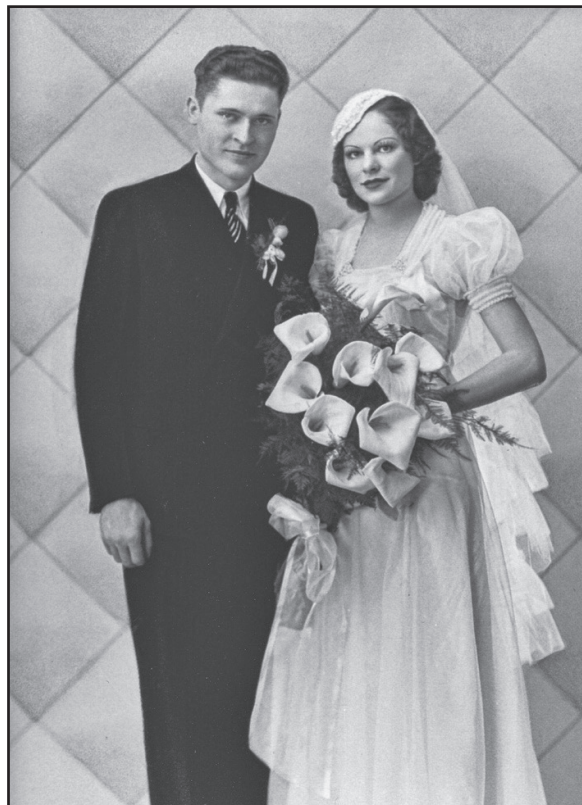
My grandfather's yard was beautified and enriched by growing things of all types. Flowers, fruit trees, nut trees, maple trees, grape vines, evergreens and flower hedges, and a well-kept vegetable garden all proclaimed the verdant wealth of a hard-working land owner. And all of these were superadded to his golden grain fields.

One beautiful day, Grandpa invited the family to see one of his newest ventures. The whole family processed after Grandpa past the granary and machine shed to a grassy hill overlooking his grain fields. There in the sunshine, he gestured to and contemplatively described the history of fifty twigs stemming from the hill in rows that were little perceptible in the green grass. Prophesying with the vision of a wise man, Grandpa pictured for us what these twigs would be in twenty years: a stately walnut grove reminiscent of a road leading to a palace.

Yes, I was deeply impressed by Grandpa's vision. I turned over in my mind the possibilities. I realized that I would be ANCIENT (about 35) by the time the twigs looked anything like arching, majestic walnut trees! My parents would be older, still! It didn't seem to bother Grandpa that he might not be alive to enjoy this regal avenue in its glorious state.

Later, more thoughts foggily rolled into my mind. Who would be living at my grandparents' house in twenty years? Who would be taking care of the trees? What about the avenues of trees I had seen in the past: who planted them and are the gardeners still alive? It was a meditation on the passage of time, and the meaning of stability.

When I hear that someone is deemed "unstable," I expect that they can't hold down a job, can't stay in one place for long, are seriously swayed by their emotions contrarily to reason, or generally cannot be counted on. My grandfather was stable. He met my grandmother and fell in love immediately. What was his intention? A "relationship" maybe? No. His intention was one of stability, that is, the vows and life of Holy Matrimony. He purchased



Wedding picture of Vladimir and Eleanor Chvilicek

a farm. Perhaps he intended to improve it and sell it in a few years? No. Again, his intention was one of stability, this time to develop the land for his children and grandchildren. He planted a walnut grove. Yes, he planted a walnut grove. Trees.

“Yes, I was deeply impressed by Grandpa’s vision.”

There is a single Tree that is the essence of stability. In fact, it is the very cause of stability. This Tree is standing still as the world is spinning beneath it. This Tree is the Cross of the God-Man and, as St. Teresa of Avila has said, He alone is changeless.

Dear Reader, all of us are a bit unstable in this world. We vacillate in our choices between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between charity and selfishness. If we want to become more stable as we stand in a spinning world, we need to fix the gaze of our mind and heart on that Cross which is standing still.

If I could try to guess the secret of my grandfather’s stability, I would have to spend a little time in my memory

gallery. And what do I see there? In some ways it is very subtle, but what I see is that my grandfather was a man of prayer. There was a large painting of Our Lord weeping over Jerusalem hanging over my grandparents’ bed and across the room there was a beautiful replica of Our Lady of Czestochowa. In one of the main rooms of the house there was an almost life-sized and very realistic painting of the Last Supper. I still remember the look on one of the servant’s faces at Our Lord, evidently during the Consecration. But the thing that probably is most to the point is what my grandfather had on the handle of his exercise bike. You guessed it – a Rosary.

My grandfather planted a walnut grove on his hill. My grandfather planted a single Tree in his own heart, and then cultivated its growth in the heart of his beloved wife. Generations of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are now able to enjoy the Fruits of that Tree. Stability. ■

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Brother Francis M.I.C.M.

FOUNDER'S COLUMN

FROM THE CHALLENGE OF FAITH

Holy Joy

1. True joy must have foundations in reality. The foundations of holy joy are the mysteries of the Rosary. If we can keep our minds and hearts on them, we shall never lose our joy.

2. Sufferings, disappointments, persecutions, frustrations, contradictions, insults, the low opinion of others, lack of consideration, coldness: all these are permitted by God as a challenge to the virtue of holy joy.

3. Holy joy is the outpouring of devotion, the measure of faith.

4. Holy joy must flow from the highest supernatural fountain-heads. When we fail to kindle a virtue from inside, we can always try to start from the outside: one short prayer or ejaculation, or a little work of faith, can often be the spark.

5. Holy joy is the radiance produced by the presence of the other virtues in the soul.

6. When the utterance of the Holy Names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph fail to put joy in our hearts, there is something wrong with our faith.

7. All actions which proceed from motives of faith and charity restore peace and joy to the soul.

Hope

1. We only begin to hope when we begin to hope in God, and not in our strength, and not in anything of this world.

2. Hope is humility: Knowledge of self and of the goodness of God.

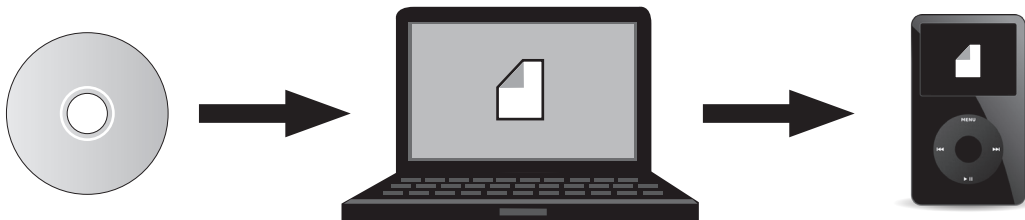
3. Hope is the most appropriate virtue for our life in via — it is the core of piety, the soul of spiritual life.

4. Hope lifts our hearts to heaven, and is mirrored in our eyes. "Hear us, O God, our Saviour, the Hope of all the ends of the earth" (Psalm 64:6). The world knows no other hope except what springs from our Faith.

5. Saint Augustine saw a necessary order of dependence in the three theological virtues: no hope without faith, and no charity without both.

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PREFECT'S COLUMN

OUR LADY AND THE VIRTUE OF HOPE

The following article is from a series of talks on the "Virtues of Our Lady."

What is hope? Scripture, in Ecclesiasticus, Ch. 24, vs. 24-26, says: "I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of

to this: **I hope for Heaven and the means to obtain it.** So hope includes, "a good death, a favorable judgment, a place in Heaven." We should not misunderstand the virtue of hope if we repeat over and over to ourselves: it is the hope for Heaven. And we should not be thinking hope is freedom from all pain and suffering.

The sins against hope are two: *presumption* — the rash expectation of salvation without making proper use of the necessary means to obtain it, and *despair* — the loss of hope in God's mercy.

holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits."

Father Spitzer, in *How to Imitate the Virtues of Our Lady*, writes, "The renowned Italian poet Dante, in the book of the *Divine Comedy*, describing a visit to the infernal regions, pictures the gate of hell as crowned by an imposing sign: Give up all hope, all you who enter here. Hell holds its horrors because it is a place devoid of hope. Its inhabitants are tortured above all by the fact that they will never see God, the object of hope."

He goes on to tell us that, "Heaven is likewise free from hope, but for a different reason. The virtue of hope means a firm assurance and confidence that, because of God's power and goodness and promises and because of the merits won for us by Christ's death on the cross, God will, if we but ask Him and cooperate with Him, surely give us heaven and the means to reach it."

Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon, in *Mary Our Mother, Our Model, and Our Queen*, tells us: "Mary's hope had not yet been raised to the luminous heights of the beatific vision. Mary is our hope, but she herself practiced hope." Father Spitzer adds, "Because Mary so perfectly practiced this virtue, because she is its model, we salute her as, 'our life, our sweetness and our hope.'"

The old Baltimore Catechism gave a simple Act of Hope: "Oh my God, relying on thy almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Thy grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer."

That same catechism defined hope as "the theological virtue which enables us to trust firmly in God and His promises of eternal life to those who love and obey Him." Hope is, "trust in God . . . Hope says, I trust that God will help me to get to heaven because He is able and has promised to do so, no matter how impossible it seems because of my own weakness . . . God has promised all the helps for body and soul that we need to get there . . . sanctifying and actual graces, the virtues, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the sacraments, etc. . . . for the body, food, clothing, etc."

The catechism reduces the substance of the Act of Hope

Feast of Our Lady of Hope

My research for my talk and this article led me to many interesting facets and stories regarding this virtue and Our Lady. You may know that the feast of Our Lady of Pontmain (1871) is January 17, which is also the day our Order was founded by Father Leonard Feeney in 1949. For that day, *Saints to Remember* says, "During the Franco-Prussian war, when the German army was about to overrun the French village of Pontmain, Our Lady appeared in the sky to six children. She gave them a message of hope: . . . 'pray my children. God will hear you in a short time. My Son permits Himself to be moved.' Pontmain was saved and within ten days the armistice was signed and the bloodshed was over." (See catholicism.org for January 17) This feast is called the feast of Our Lady of Hope and she revealed herself as, "Madonna of the Crucifix," and gave the world her message of "Hope through Prayer and the Cross."

Devotion to Our Lady of Hope is one of the oldest Marian devotions. The first shrine bearing that title was erected at Mezieres, France, in the year 930.

How to Imitate the Virtues of Our Lady

In his book, Father Spitzer tells us of two important points about Our Lady and this virtue. Firstly, "**The Test of Mary's Hope.** To equip her for her task of teaching us the virtue of hope, God permitted Mary's confidence in Him to be tried. It happened this way. In accordance with the Jewish marriage ritual, Mary had been espoused to a young carpenter named Joseph, who like herself belonged to the royal family of David. This espousal was a formal engagement entered upon before priest and witnesses, which was to last for a year and to climax in marriage. Tradition tells us that Mary and Joseph agreed that at all times they would preserve and protect their virginity, even after their marriage; the plans of God had brought them together so that the Son of God in His human nature would have a protector and a foster father. Mary told Joseph nothing of the great event which had transpired on the day of the Annunciation when, through the power of the Holy Spirit, she had conceived the Son of God. Her heart was cut by sorrow as she realized Joseph's anguish upon discovering



her to be with child. Since God had not instructed her to reveal the reason and meaning of her condition, she prayed earnestly for her fiance, begging God to lift the cloud of worry which made Joseph contemplate [putting her away privately], not because he suspected Mary's virtue but because something mysterious had happened which he could not explain and which Mary would not share with him."

Secondly, we have, "**The Triumph of Mary's Hope.** Mary prayed. She recalled the promises which God had made by the lips of the prophets and the psalmist. 'What need Lord, of aught but thyself to bring me confidence?' 'Have mercy on me oh God, have mercy on me: here is a soul that puts its trust in thee; I will take refuge under the shelter of thy wings, till the storms pass by.' She thought of the heroic examples of hope related in the scriptures: Abraham and Issac, the Patriarch Joseph, Esther, Judith. Her tender prayers touched the mercy of God. 'Patiently I waited for the Lord's help, and at last He turned his look towards me; He listened to my pleas.' To the tears of Mary . . . God brought a miraculous solution; He sent an angel to explain to Joseph, Mary's divine motherhood — and Joseph at once in joy took Mary as his wife. Those hours of bitter sorrow and confident prayer won for Mary the title of 'Mother of Holy Hope.'"

Practical Advice from a Venerable

Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon explains, "Hope works wonders. It reveals the vanity of earthly things, it detaches us from them and makes us love poverty. Did anyone besides Jesus love poverty more than Mary did? She lived by the labor of her hands, had only a stable to bring forth the Savior of the world. She lived in a carpenter's workshop, and when Jesus died, Saint John had to take her into his home: 'From that hour onward, the disciple took her into his care. (Jn 19:27)' **Poverty is the counterpart of hope.** Those who hope unwisely yearn for the goods of the earth. Those who hope at least a little become detached from earthly possessions. Those who hope in an absolute way practise the virtue of poverty in the most rigorous sense of the word. We need not labor this relationship too much, but we should remember that no one can serve two masters at one and the same time. Let us hope. Let us scorn the things of the earth and turn ourselves toward heaven." And it is our holy Mother, in Her Immaculate Heart, who shows us the way.

Our Lady of Hope, pray for us. ■

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Mr. Brian Kelly

KELLY FORUM APOSTLE TO THE GERASENES

A most unlikely apostle indeed. Who was it? It was the possessed Gerasene lunatic, who dwelt among the graves, out from whom were cast many devils. The devil's voice claimed that their name was "Legion," and legion means between three and six thousand soldiers. Demons

like to flaunt their imagined importance and use titles such as this. But Saint Luke tells us simply that "many devils were entered into him" (Luk8:30). Enough there were, nevertheless, that they entered into a herd of swine and ran them off a cliff. Saint Mark gives the number of swine at about two thousand. So, that's a lot of evil spirits possessing one man.

These must have been very pathetic demons pained by agoraphobia to be sure. It must have been awfully crowded in that one body. The Legion liked scaring people and tearing the flesh of this victim without killing him. Some demons need a live body to exact their frustration before the final day. This man, whose story is so innocently told in the gospels, was prime prey for the sorry Legion.

It is interesting that Jesus asked the demoniac what his name was. Why? It would seem because Our Lord wanted to show how great was His power over all demons no matter how many or high.

The Gerasenes would have none of this however. How unlike the Samaritans who welcomed Our Lord.

Brother Francis wrote a poem about them.

The Prayer of the Gerasenes

The Gerasenes certainly
Know how to pray
In polite dignity and
Solemn display,
And their prayer was answered
On the very same day.
Now this is the substance
Of what they had to say:
"We want our swine
And demons to stay
And please, God, leave us
And go away.
Amen!

"And all the multitude of the country of the Gerasenes besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear" (Luke 8:37).

Contrast this with the Samaritans. The account of Our Lord's meeting with the Samaritan woman is unique to Saint John's Gospel. In fact about 90% of Saint John's Gospel is his

alone, not found in the synoptic accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The story of the possessed Gerasene is related in all three synoptic accounts, but not in John. Curiously, Matthew says there were two demoniacs, "exceedingly fierce," dwelling amid the sepulchres. Mark and Luke mention only the one. What one account supplies, the others omit. I'll let that be. There is no contradiction. We have a similar "problem" with the two thieves crucified with Christ. One account, Mark, says that they both reviled Christ, but Luke tells us the fact that one, Dismas, repented and was promised salvation by Jesus. How is this? I think it was Saint Augustine who pointed out that there is no contradiction here either: Dismas did at first blaspheme, but after he heard Jesus asking forgiveness from His Father for His enemies who "knew not what they were doing," the Good Thief was cut to the heart.

Back to the Samaritans. Some of the Samaritans believed the report of the woman who had returned so excitedly to the town from the well (without her water jugs) and they came back with her to meet this Man who claimed to be the Messiah. All it took was these words, from a woman, to excite their holy curiosity "Come, and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not he the Christ?" (John 4:29). And seeing and hearing Him, they believed. So great was their enthusiasm that Our Lord and the Apostles remained two days among the people announcing the gospel. No miracles are recorded. No demoniacs cured or swine hoofing it off a cliff, just Christ's reading of the woman's heart and His preaching the word among them. What great faith! "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (John 20:29). (Note: The woman at the well ended up testifying to the Faith in Africa. Her name is Photina, which means "light." She and her two sons were martyred in Carthage.)

What happens next in Our Lord's encounter with the Gerasene is intriguing. The man who had been delivered by Our Lord had immense gratitude. No wonder about that. So great was his gratitude that he didn't want to be left behind in his own country. Perhaps he was afraid people would be afraid of him. Who could blame him? So, he asked if he could get into the boat and go away with Jesus and the Apostles. But Jesus "sent him away" and said "[No, rather] Return to thy house, and tell how great things God hath done to thee. And he went through the whole city, publishing how great things Jesus had done to him" (Luke 8:39).

The word of the Lord strengthened him and cast out all fear. We do not know the name of this man; scripture doesn't provide that. But we do know that he preached the Name of Jesus throughout the whole city and testified to the "great things" Jesus had done for him. And we do know that he was "sent" by God. The word "apostle" means "one sent." So, we can say that this man was an apostle to his gentile people, the Gerasenes. ■

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MY MORNING CUP OF JOE — PART IV

BY RUSSELL LAPLUME

Since we are on the subject of getting old — we were talking about that, weren't we? — or is my mind slipping into two months feeling like it was two years ago. Time, oh time, it goes so fast as you age. The body slows down, but the mind usually quickens, most often reflecting on all those events that occurred when the body was livelier. Reflection becomes a daily excruciating examination, and in my case, always accompanied with regret. So much time wasted, so many missed opportunities to perform charity,

“His creatures are doomed to remember all that could have been had they responded more keenly when the grace was freely given.”

so many times setting a bad example, and much more time satisfying my own body while neglecting the Mystical Body we are called to serve. It is said that “it is never too late,” but in a sense it can be, for all those graces ignored can never be retrieved, and though we may cooperate with the many heavenly aids being sent to us now, the cup will never be as full as it should have been.

Thank God for the cleansing calmativ of Confession, which gives peace to the soul, for though our God forgives and forgets, His creatures are doomed to remember all that could have been had they responded more keenly when the grace was freely given. Reflecting upon my prior life, I always seem to dwell on the missed acts of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy I could have performed — those sins of omission. I will give an example:

I was driving to the post office on a particularly windy day and came upon a medium-sized tree limb in my lane. Instead of stopping to remove it for fellow travelers, I swerved around it and continued on my way. My guardian angel would have none of it, so he prompted me to

turn around and do my duty. I protested saying that it was not a well-traveled road, but promised on the way back, if it was still there, that I would remove it. On my return trip, the sun created shadows on the tree-studded roadway, and as I squinted to locate the place where the limb had been, I was startled by a loud bang underneath my truck. It seems that another vehicle had come along and nudged that limb into my present lane thus causing the tumult. I pulled over, removed the limb from the roadside, inspected my vehicle and saw that a strap holding up my muffler had broken, then turned around and suggested to my angel to get that grin off his face. If I may make a pun, since my exhaust system was adversely affected, I suppose it was a sin of emissions.

My wife frequently states that the best things in life are free, and that most people do not appreciate the things that are free; she also always reminds the family that if you are remiss in doing little things, then you will be neglectful in the doing the bigger ones. Another example:

How many times when using the lavatory have we discovered that the tissue has run out? And how many times have we noticed that only a few layers have been left by the previous occupant, just enough to justify (in their minds) not having to install a new roll. Aggravating isn't it? More so in my case, for the new rolls seem to be constructed adult proof, and inevitably in trying to start one neatly, I end up with a pile of confetti at my feet.

Another item that bothers me in the daily reflection on my youth is almsgiving and tithing. As a child, I remember my father coming home with his cashed paycheck and giving it to my mother, a fact I could never understand even as a youth, for it seemed that the husband should have control of the needs of the household, with generous input of the wife, of course. I know that all households are different, but relegating the budget to the women's control seems to me another duty that the man is relinquishing. After all, usually the first word out of the mouth of the husband is “No,” and from the wife is “Yes,” so after the battle dust has settled, a somewhat balanced



The Circumcision

budget is achieved. Try that in reverse order and see where it gets you.

But I digress, and where was I? Oh yes, my mother would take that money and put it in her budget envelope, an envelope filled with sleeves, and all marked with titles such as heat, grocery, electric, insurance and so on. What sticks in my mind now is the first sleeve, the one marked “Church.” In the regular distribution of cash, this sleeve was always filled first, then the others in order of importance. She would sometimes remove some from heat and give it to electric or otherwise exchange among the other categories, but she would never take it from the Church sleeve. To her, this was God’s money: sacrosanct, and once designated, not to be touched. There was a lesson here for me, and a grace given to remember it, but it did not stick, and in future years I did exactly the opposite. In my budget envelope, there was room for Church only after all the other bills had been satisfied, and if there was a shortfall, there was no room for Church. What was I thinking? Did I not know that tithing was an obligation incumbent on all children of God, that I was not only responsible to maintain my household but His, and to put Him last in the support of His ministers was to commit a serious sin of omission? I should and could have denied myself that pack of cigarettes, that six-pack of beer, that rental of a movie and sundry other consumerist delights that I enjoyed during the week, then taken that money and slipped it into the Church sleeve. My Sundays now are more peaceful because I never let that basket go by without donating, and my regrets are limited to the past. This is one case where the best things in life, the Mass and the sacraments, are not necessarily free. The Apostle does remind us, after all, “For the scripture saith: *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn: and, The labourer is worthy of his reward*” (I Tim. 5:18).

Just as an aside, I will mention one work of mercy that most people perform without hesitation, that of admonishing the sinner. Whether it be face to face, or in the privacy of our minds, we all are guilty of pointing out the speck in our neighbor’s eye, and not noticing the beam in our own. To try and cure this ill in my character, I have taken to staring in the mirror daily, then reciting a ditty I have composed for the occasion. I call it “Reflection,” and it goes thusly:

Up to the mirror I close
Chin to chin
Nose to nose
Eye to eye
And what do I see
Staring at me
But hypocrisy
For if the eyes are the window of the soul
Then the mirror will tell what’s told.

I beg my readers’ patience in having to suffer through that, but this is my only opportunity to get it published.

Now on to the fourth mystery of my Saint Joseph Rosary, “St. Joseph Circumcises the Baby Jesus.” Bet you didn’t know that, did you? But if you take the time to read *The Life and Glories of St. Joseph*, this and many other astounding facts will grip your heart and increase your devotion to this miraculous saint. My most insufferable arguments have been with mostly pious persons who have been mistaken, yes mistaken, about the elevated sanctity of Saint Joseph, and once you become his devotee, you find yourself having to defend him against these misguided perceptions. For instance, it is said in the Bible that no man born of woman was greater than John the Baptist. Obviously, Our Lord is a Man, and we naturally exclude Him from the argument, so the case is presented that Saint John must be next in line. However, upon reading Saint Luke’s account, we find stated “that no greater *prophet* was born of woman.” So which is it? It is believed that Saint Luke received much of his material from Our Lady herself, and I like to believe that Our lady took it upon herself to correct the perception for future generations regarding this matter. Since the Bible accounts cannot err, what is left can only mean “no greater prophet born of woman,” thus leaving Saint Joseph with the singular title of being the greatest mere man ever born. And it is affirmed by many Fathers and Doctors of the Church that Saint Joseph was sanctified in the womb; in time, after Our Lady, but in time, before Saint John.

The most common mistake made with regard to Saint Joseph is his trial — the supposed anguish he endured when he found that Our Lady was with Child. There are a few pious orators who say that Joseph had distressing alternations of doubt and suspicions of infidelity concerning his immaculate spouse. We are talking about Joseph the Just here, one who followed the Mosaic law to the letter. It was his duty under the law to expose her as an adulterer if he truly believed that to be the case, for as Saint Jerome says, “If it was a precept of the Law, that not only the guilty, but those who had knowledge of their guilt, were under the penalty of sin, how could Joseph, in concealing the sin of his wife, be styled just?” So what was this pondering to put Mary away privately that Joseph entertained? Saint Francis de Sales, echoing the sentiments of Saint Bernard exclaims, “The humility of Joseph was the cause of his desiring to abandon Our Lady when he perceived her to be with Child... Joseph reasons thus: ‘What is this? I know that she is a virgin, for together we took vows ...might it be that she is that glorious virgin of whom the prophet declares – if this be so, far be it from me to abide any longer with her, I who am unworthy to do so.’ He considered himself totally unworthy to be the head of that holy household, and thus, after providing Mary with unblemished security, would

depart himself from these holy presences.

Joseph circumcising Jesus is much easier to comprehend. The rite did not have to be accomplished by a priest, nor at the Temple or a synagogue, and could be performed

“ ...an act, Saint Bernard says, greater than Abraham sacrificing Isaac ...”

by a total stranger in a private house. It was also the duty of whomever performed the operation to announce the name the child had been given, and since we know that the angel had said to Joseph, “Thou shall call His name Jesus” (Matt.1:21), it is most probable that Joseph was the administrator of that rite. One can’t describe the pain that Joseph endured in performing this painful act so repugnant to his tender heart. It is handed down that Mary held the baby Jesus on her knees while Joseph, tears flowing, steeled his nerve and steadied his hand to perform this heroic act; an act, Saint Bernard says, greater than Abraham sacrificing Isaac, for there was no angel to stay his hand, and the knife that cut Jesus, also pierced his heart — his first sword of sorrow.

There was one time while meditating upon this mystery that I placed myself with Joseph in the courtyard outside his house. The faint cries of Jesus could be heard, and Joseph was attentive to any summons coming from Mary within the household. Trying to distract his thoughts, (and weakly I might add), I said, “You know Joseph, I spend more time defending the misconceptions of your life than I do spreading your devotion. It seems that the early Fathers had it right, but somehow through the ages your cultus, on the whole, came to a screeching halt. As I am sure you will remind me, it was God’s will and let it be so. However, it is also said that a sure sign of the latter days will be an increased knowledge and popularity of your life. Well, sometimes I feel like a prophet of doom — when I tell people about this fact, it is like I’m saying “eat, drink and be merry with Joseph, for tomorrow you may die.” Joseph chuckles at this and says, “rather tell them pray, fast and do penance, so in eternity you may live.”

There is a whimper and a summons coming from the house; Joseph, ever watchful, departs quickly, as I do, reflecting on this most marvelous mystery. ▪

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GUEST COLUMN THOUGHTS FOR JEROME



Brother John Neumann,
M.I.C.M., Tert.

former IRS agent skills.

Life and taxes for me are simpler these days, now that I've retired and migrated to a tax-friendlier state. Hence, I possibly could manage without Jerome — and spare myself a 200-mile round trip for his services. But I'd miss him. Mainly because he's Jewish, and has a fabulous wealth of knowledge not only on Jewish culture — we're quite able to exchange our contrary religious views with mutual interest and common courtesy, you see — but on so many other topics, as well, that never before interested me much, yet that take on a riveting aura when presented out of the mind and mouth of Jerome the tax man.

Likewise, he's a very good, very attentive listener to my own discourses, even on subjects over which he may disagree with me (such as politics), and even on subjects over which he decidedly disagrees with me (such as religion). So, how could I not look forward to tax time and my sessions with Jerome?

Now, U.S. presidents particularly fascinate him — all of them, including those he wouldn't vote for. He retains an amazing amount of detailed knowledge about probably most of them. In fact, he has visited the graves of all but one.

So, he's both keenly aware of, and fixedly interested in, the fact that I grew up on a side street just off a main one on which two presidents had resided nearby: John Adams and George H. W. Bush, the latter of whom I met a few years ago. Not surprisingly, therefore, that senior Bush will invariably come up in our tax-preparation talks; as it did again this year. And though I can't remember how exactly his name first arose this time, it led to my narrating how this erstwhile neighbor/erstwhile president is a Freemason, who chose for the slogan of his administration the Masonic term, the "New World Order," and who, I had read recently from a fairly reliable source, was quoted as having prophesied, with uncharacteristic boldness, something to the effect (my memory fails on the exact words) that a major event would occur at the turn of the new millennium — which, it was suggested, had meant 9/11 — that would prepare the way towards fully establishing that New World Order.

This, I recognized, was probably a pretty strong dose of elixir even for Jerome to swallow. But he respectfully said nothing — until the next day, that is, when I received a

rather surprising e-mail from him containing this:

"Sorry; just researched [George H.W.'s father] Prescott Bush's supposed involvement with the Nazis.

"[Prescott] Bush was a founding member and one of seven directors (including W. Averell Harriman) of the Union Banking Corporation (holding a single share out of 4,000 as a director), an investment bank that operated as a clearing house for many assets and enterprises held by German steel magnate Fritz Thyssen. In July 1942, the bank was suspected of holding gold on behalf of Nazi leaders. A subsequent government investigation disproved those allegations but confirmed the Thyssens' control, and in October 1942 the United States seized the bank under the Trading with the Enemy Act and held the assets for the duration of World War II. Journalist Duncan Campbell pointed out documents showing that Prescott Bush was a director and shareholder of a number of companies involved with Thyssen."

I wrote in reply that "at the end of the historical note on Prescott Bush (and Averell Harriman) which you shared with me, there was also a disclaimer, of sorts, stating: 'According to journalist Joe Conason, Prescott Bush's involvement with UBC was purely commercial and he was not a Nazi sympathizer.' To whatever degree part of that may be true, if you'll allow me, I'd like to make some observations for you to consider."

Those observations now follow.

You may be aware of the Franklin Roosevelt quote: "In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way." The longer I live, the more convinced I am of how true this is.

Some personalities at the rarefied heights of government and power — who would include the likes of the elder Bushes, the Rockefellers, Averell Harriman (a ranking Democrat who served under Roosevelt, and was present at the Yalta Agreement at which the U.S. surrendered Eastern Europe to the Stalin-ruled Soviet Union) — such personalities don't usually involve themselves with international intrigue and mischief for "purely commercial" gain alone. The financial benefits, great though they can be, are only a lesser, incidental advantage of sitting among very elite gatherings of internationalist movers and shakers who, to be sure, do not suffer gladly any competition with, opposition to, or notoriety about, their dominant hold on power.

This shouldn't surprise you in the case of centenarian David Rockefeller, for one example. So prestigiously powerful was he in his active days, and so far above national partisanship and interests, that at the height of our Cold War with the USSR, he could enter and exit Moscow more easily than could we common-folk at a local library; he was never subject to customs or security checks of any kind. And Rockefeller's bank in Moscow did not look like any banking

offices we're familiar with — the simple reason being that its clientele wasn't everyday Russian citizenry or private business, but the Soviet government itself.

While much could be written about my former fellow townsman, the senior George Bush, nothing about the man would particularly distinguish him as a brilliant intellectual, a business genius, a formidable politico, or a shrewd diplomat. Nevertheless, he enjoyed prominent success in the oil business (an industry in which government favor is most important) which he first entered into with a firm that was a Brown Brothers Harriman subsidiary. Then came his star-crossed path through the world of government and politics: congressman, senator, UN ambassador, Republican National Committee chairman, envoy to Red China, CIA director, vice president under Reagan, and finally U.S. president. (He had been considered for vice president by Gerald Ford, too, only to be passed over in the end for *Nelson Rockefeller* instead.) One must wonder, what especially qualified him to hold so many sometimes disparate high-level offices, other than his favored status with the right people in the right circles of power? What indeed, other than his having been a member of Yale's elite and secretive Skull and Bones Society, a 33rd degree member of Freemasonry and, in later years, a member of the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations and the even more select Trilateral Commission.

For more telling examples of what I'm hinting at, overall, let me point further back in history.

Almost exactly sixty years after the monstrously bloody French Revolution was orchestrated by Illuminized Freemasons, a daisy chain of smaller, less successful revolutions broke out in various European countries. This, of course, was the same year, 1848, that Karl Marx produced the *Communist Manifesto*. (Hence, Marx is often called the Father of Communism, which is not quite accurate. The title more aptly belongs to Moses Hess, who had converted Friedrich Engels and Marx to the communist philosophy, and later collaborated with them on the *Manifesto*.)

Though the son of a rabbi, Marx had embraced Christianity for a while in his youth, only later to forsake religion altogether. According to Richard Wurmbrand, a historian and Lutheran pastor of Jewish decent, he then became part of an organized Satanist movement. He also had a close working affiliation with the revolutionist Giuseppe Mazzini, of the Freemasonic Carbonari which professed its "final aim to be that of Voltaire and of the French Revolution — the complete annihilation of Catholicism and ultimately of Christianity." It is said that through his Mazzini association Marx himself became an Illuminist Freemason.

According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Mazzini and Marx were entrusted with the task of preparing the address and the constitution of the (Communist) First International, convened in London. The question that then begs answer

is: entrusted by whom? Wouldn't this clearly imply a higher authority?

Early radical manhood for Friedrich Engels, Marx's lesser fellow contributor to the *Manifesto*, was spent in England, a haven in those days for Continental revolutionaries in exile. Likewise, London was home to an organization alternately identified as the League of the Just and the League of Twelve Just Men, which historian Wurmbrand linked directly to Illuminist Freemasonry. I recall reading elsewhere many years ago that the League of the Just sent Marx a warning letter, probably through Engels, demanding that he finish the *Manifesto* by a date early in 1848. This was because the document was needed to appear later as a philosophical fuse that, it could be purported, had ignited all the "spontaneous revolutionary uprisings of downtrodden masses" already being scheduled to break out that year across Europe.

Those insurrections weren't spontaneous at all, of course — no more than were the 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles or the 2015 Ferguson, Missouri Riots led by trained agitators from out-of-state who were funded, at least in part, by George Soros. Largescale destructive riots do not simply start spontaneously and sustain themselves for days and weeks at a time. They have to be carefully planned and skillfully orchestrated!

Such was the case with the 1917 Communist Revolution in Russia. According to the *New York Journal American* for February 3, 1949, it was Jacob Schiff's grandson, John, who revealed that his grandfather, head of the Kuhn Loeb investment firm, had given \$20 million to Leon Trotsky to finance the Russian Revolution. It's further documented that V. I. Lenin was secretly transported back into Russia, from exile in Switzerland, in a sealed box car with \$6 million in gold.

So, revolutions not only need to be well planned and skillfully led — what's more important, they also have to be richly endowed!

All of this — and so many, many more examples that could be cited — help to show very clearly (a) that internationalists do indeed have much greater interests than mere money in their schemes, and (b) that Roosevelt was quite right: Virtually nothing in government happens anymore without it having been planned.

But then, too, Almighty God is still in His heaven. Nothing can happen unless He permits it. And He will not permit evil to reign either absolutely or forever.

That's partly because His most holy Mother simply won't allow it. And God always listens to His Mother!

P.S. I did get a reply to this from Jerome. In his typical terse style, it read: "Outstanding summary, Bill!" I think we're beginning to see things eye to eye. ■

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The propagation and defense of Catholic dogma — especially *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* — and the conversion of America to the one, true Church.

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V. Let us pray for our pontiff, Pope Francis.

R. The Lord preserve him, and give him life, and make him to be blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies (Roman Breviary).

Our Father. Hail Mary.

V. Let us pray.

R. Almighty and everlasting God, have mercy upon Thy servant, Francis, our Supreme Pontiff, and direct him, according to Thy loving kindness, in the way of eternal salvation; that, of thy gift, he may ever desire that which is pleasing unto Thee and may accomplish it with all his might. Through Christ our Lord. Amen (Roman Ritual).

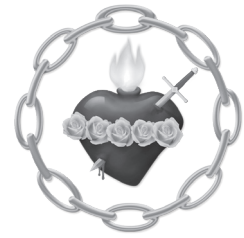
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