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FOR THE TRIUMPH OF THE IMMACULATE

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With Mary and Joseph, let us adore Jesus, our God and Saviour



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MICHAEL

A journal of Catholic patriots for the Kingship of Christ and Mary in souls, in families and in nations

For social justice through Economic Democracy in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church through the vigilant actions of heads of families, and not through political parties

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Letter from the Editor

"A non-optional option"

From a religious point of view, today's society has changed a great deal over the past two generations: whereas in the past almost everyone practiced the Christian faith, today a large majority do not attend churches, and several are even going so far as to deny the existence of God, saying that such a belief is "incompatible with science." Really? Yet, from a simple scientific point of view, it makes much more sense to believe that the world was created by God than by chance (*see page 5*).

In fact, it is reason itself that leads us to discover that God exists, and it is Revelation that teaches us that this God sent His Son Jesus to earth to save us, and that, ultimately, all that God does is out of love, that God Himself is love (*see page 8*). If people would study the Catechism of the Catholic Church even a little, many prejudices against the Catholic religion would fall away, and Catholics would know what to answer to the objections of unbelievers, such as "if God is so good, why does evil exist in the world?"

Faith is ultimately a grace, a free gift from God, which can be obtained by anyone who asks for it in prayer and humility. "Everyone who asks receives." (Matthew 7:8). Just as pride closed the gates of Heaven to Lucifer and his fallen angels, humility—knowing that you are weak and limited, and in need of God's help—opens them to us. A great example of humility is that of Pope John Paul I, who died after 33 days of pontificate in 1978, and who was declared blessed by Pope Francis on September 4, 2022 (*see page 23*).

Very often, it is impossible, or even useless, to try to convince the indifferent or the adversaries of the Catholic Faith by words, but all can testify by their example of life, thus making visible the love of Christ. And as Saint John Paul II wrote in his encyclical Redemptoris Missio (n. 42), "The evangelical witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity toward the poor, the weak and those who suffer" as well as "a commitment to peace, justice."

Moreover, how do you convince someone who lives in misery that God is good, when he knows only suffering and poverty in his life? Most Rev. Pierre Goudreault, Bishop of the Diocese of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, in the province of Quebec, recently wrote a book in French titled *Les visages de la pauvreté* (The Faces of Poverty). According to Bishop Goudreault, "one cannot call oneself a Christian if one despises the poor and if one does not engage in the struggle for their dignity" and he adds that "the preferential option for the poor, for a Catholic, is "a non-optional option." (In other words, we have no choice; if we claim to be a Catholic, we must work to correct social injustices.)

Bishop Goudreault adds: "Many Christians are wary of politics and are content to confine their faith to its spiritual dimension and to occasional charity through donations made to organizations that help the poor. It is, let us not be afraid to say it, a narrow conception of the Christian faith."



"Genuine love... tries to uncover the causes of poverty and looks for effective ways of combatting them" — St. Paul VI

It is in this spirit that St. Pope Paul VI wrote in his encyclical Populorum progressio on the development of peoples (n. 75): **"The person who is motivated by genuine love, more than anyone else, pits his intelligence against the problems of poverty, trying to uncover the causes and looking for effective ways of combatting and overcoming them."** It is to answer this call from St. Pope Paul VI that MICHAEL and the Louis Even Institute have taken on as their mission the following objective: "To educate on the causes of poverty and on the ways of combatting them" (*see page 4*).

As a way of combatting poverty, MICHAEL chose to publicize Scottish engineer Clifford Hugh Douglas' solution of economic democracy, specifying, among other things, that money should be issued by society, and not by private corporations (*see pages 12 to 17*).

Still in Bishop Goudreault's book, one reads: "(Pope) Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation The Joy of the Gospel, recalls that "no one can feel exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice." The demand for charity, which is at the heart of the Christian faith, must be accompanied, insists Bishop Goudreault, by a denunciation of the "injustices caused by social structures which impoverish certain people or entire populations."

"We know the true evangelical criterion of justice. It is recorded in Matthew 25: "For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat... Amen, I say to you: whenever you did to one of these least of my brothers, you have done it to me." An updated version of the excerpt, inspired by the preferential option for the poor, would add: I was a victim of an unjust socio-economic system, and you acted to challenge it and to replace it."

Well said, Bishop Goudreault! It is indeed on this that we will be judged. So, let's act on it! ❖

Alain Pilote, Editor

The mission of MICHAEL: "To educate on the causes of poverty and the ways of combatting them"

Here are excerpts from the speech that Marcelle Caya, the new Director General of the Louis Even Institute, addressed to the Annual Congress of MICHAEL in September 2022:



It is certainly a great joy, for each of us, to be together again to live this Congress and this Triduum in joy, friendship, and in the spirit of our charisma: To educate on the causes of poverty and the ways of combatting them (according to the words of Pope St. Paul VI in his encyclical letter *Populorum progressio*). Like Louis Even, let us be educators, prophets in charity.

Like many among you, I come from a Social Credit family: for this I thank God; and I especially thank Him for the immense gift of the Catholic Faith.

After the unexpected death of our dearly departed Marcel Lefebvre, you now have a new team of Directors. This loss which shook us greatly, as we always are when one of our own leaves us, is a wound that will take time to heal. Marcel Lefebvre made his mark; the loss of his enthusiasm is sorely felt.

I have been a Pilgrim of Saint Michael for 53 years. With the help of the other Directors, we are doing our best to continue the mission. We ask for help from Heaven, the Holy Spirit, and we count on your prayers.

Our charisma is to work for social justice by educating our brothers and sisters for a better world; it is to be prophets; it is to practice charity, because we accomplish our mission freely.

Social Justice, a well-balanced justice, certainly desired by God, is a just distribution of riches according to the needs of each, so that all individuals can have access, without difficulty, to the resources available to satisfy their essential needs. It is the social dividend, that is an important point in the Social Credit doctrine.

This work, accomplished by the White Berets of the Michael Journal since its founding in 1939 by Louis Even, proves, as Louis Even said, that it is possible to educate a population. The results are here before us.

We can all admit that Canada is the country which offers the best social conditions: old age pensions, family allowances and all types of assistance. It is because our people have understood their right to a revenue not tied to employment, which is the dividend. It is not perfect, but for the people who benefit from it, their state of life would be better.

"Once the population is informed, the governments must take notice. This education was accomplished through the voice of Michael and its apostles. As Msgr. Placide Mukendi, vicar general of the Diocese of Mbuji Mayi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, at one of our study sessions on Economic Democracy: **"There are here, in Canada, more White Berets than we see. The people understand Social Credit and are White Berets without knowing it."**

The voice of the Pilgrims of Saint Michael is the Michael Journal… Whether it be in digital form on social medias or in paper format, it is always appreciated, and this we must maintain. And the voice of the Michael Journal is you, apostles of right thinking!

"An important point of the Social Credit doctrine is that the government must itself create its own money, and not borrow it, at interest, from private banks. Today, the challenge is sizeable, faced with this digital-identity plan. Michael and our leaflets denounces this diabolical plan. You have leaflets available to you… We must inform the population. Our mission is great. We must be like Louis Even: educators, prophets, apostles.

"Working with charity since its beginning, the mission of the Pilgrims of Saint Michael is truly apostolic. "Apostles of right thinking". The apostolate, the gift of self, though love of God and neighbor, is what truly gives results. Our charisma is on the temporal plane for Social Credit, and on the spiritual plane through prayer and by the example of a life lived honestly and by the apostolate.

One can read in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, from the Second Vatican Council:

"Such a life requires a continual exercise of faith, hope and charity. Only by the light of faith and by meditation on the Word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in Whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), seek His will in every event, see Christ in everyone, whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgements about the true meaning and value of temporal things, both in themselves and in their relation to man's final goal.

"In the pilgrimage of this life, hidden with Christ in God and free from enslavement to wealth, they aspire to those riches which remain forever, and generously dedicate themselves wholly to the advancement of the Kingdom of God and to the reform and improvement of the temporal order in a Christian spirit." (*Apostolicam actuositatem* n.4)

In reading these lines from the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, it seems to me to represent the life of a Pilgrim of Saint Michael. It is truly in this spirit of spreading the reign of God that we pursue our apostolate, especially when we go visit families for the Rosary Crusade. In our visits, we always want to bring to our brothers and sisters a positive message, a message of hope, of charity.

The Rosary Crusade apostolate is certainly a celestial credit. Praying a decade of the Rosary with a family draws them closer to their celestial credit. For my part, the visit to families is a great motivator; bringing the *Michael* message is a reward. Michael is a light on their road. *Michael* must go into as many families as possible.

"Let us remain faithful to the Church; let us be convinced that the Holy Spirit is always at work, today, as always.

"Let us be true Pilgrims of Saint Michael: let us subscribe to Michael, distribute leaflets. And especially, let us not forget that we are on the winning team, on Saint Michael the Archangel's team, of our mother Mary Immaculate, and on the team of Christ the King. Let us not fear the future but let us live in the present time. Let us live our Congress with enthusiasm, according to the greatness of our mission. ❖

Marcelle Caya

Does God exist?

Nowadays, many people use science to say that God does not exist, that He did not create the universe. And yet, as science demonstrates, it takes even more faith to believe that the world happened by chance and was not created by God, than to believe that God is the one and only Creator of the universe. This is explained in the following article, posted in French on the website www.leverbe.com, reproduced with their kind permission:

"It takes more faith to be an atheist: you have to accept to believe the impossible!"

***by* Simon Lessard**

One day I asked an old gentleman, "How do you know whether God exists or not?" With a smirk, he took a small blade of grass between his fingers and said to me, "Look at this! All scientists on earth are not even able to do that!" Not stupid, the old gentleman!

Having a first knowledge of the existence of God is not very difficult.

Imagine that on the far side of the moon, we discover a fully automated factory of smartphones. Are we suddenly going to exclaim:

"Wow! It's amazing what chance has done!" Surely not! In a much more rational way, you'd be like, "Um, I imagine some people came here to build this factory."

Or, if you are walking on the beach and suddenly come across a wonderful sandcastle. Are we going to say to ourselves, "It's amazing what chance has done with the wind and the water?" Well no! You will rather say that a very intelligent and skillful person has surely been there.

So why, when we observe a cell, a tree, an eye or a man, which are all infinitely more complex than a sandcastle or a telephone, do we say that there it is completely different and that chance alone explains all this without any intelligence? However, it is obvious that nature is not an invention of men. Where does the world around us come from? Where do we come from?

Believing in chance

Believing in chance as the cause of everything beautiful and organized in the world is basically less rational than thinking that a powerful and intelligent being called "God" is behind it all. Why? Because everything that has a complex order always comes from an intelligence. Whether it's a castle, a telephone, a novel, or a blade of grass!

By chance, if I shuffle a deck of four playing cards, they might fall in order: jack, queen, king, ▶



In July 2022, NASA released the first images from new James Webb Space Telescope, showing constellations never seen before, giving us an idea of the vastness of the universe, and by extension, the infinite greatness of God, Creator of all this universe. The photo above shows the star-forming region called NGC 3324, or "Cosmic Cliffs", in the Carina Nebula, about 7,600 light years from earth.

ace. But this is a very simple order. I have a one in 24 chance of that happening. But if I take a full deck of cards, what are the chances that all 52 cards will fall in order by chance?

It is so unlikely that even if we managed to stir very quickly, say once per second, it would take at least not 14 billion years, but 1 followed by 50 zeros times 14 billion years to arrive on average to this combination!

But, did you know that a single DNA code is like a deck of billions of cards? However, scientists estimate that our universe has existed for about 14 billion years. It is very, very, very little time to explain that chance can produce orders of such complexity.

It is, basically, mathematically so improbable that it is much more rational to think that there is another cause at the origin of all these beautiful things that we see.

In addition, according to the laws of physics, mixing increases entropy and promotes disorganization. In short, the more we stir, the less we build, the more we destroy!

How long would it take us to put a deck of cards in order? About two minutes if we're quick enough. An intelligence can do in two minutes what chance cannot do in 14 billion years. In fact, we cannot even be certain that this will happen in an unimaginable number of years, so much greater than that of the approximate age of the universe!

The more does not come out of the less

If a teenager leaves his bedroom in the greatest disarray in the morning, and when he arrives from school, he finds it perfectly clean and orderly, he will not say to himself: "How lucky I am. I left the window of my room open and the wind has all folded my laundry and arranged my books in alphabetical order in my library!" He will rather logically think that his mother who loves him very much has been there, right?

All of these examples are based on a truth that underlies all science: every effect must necessarily have a more perfect cause. That is to say, the more perfect cannot be produced by the less perfect, or put more simply: the more does not come out of the less.

Let's take other examples. If someone enters his house and hears music in his brother's room, then surely there is a cause for the music he hears. He doesn't think music appears by magic. Even if he doesn't see any speakers or musicians, he knows that one or the other is somewhere in the house.

Same thing if we see a frame hanging on the wall of a friend's room: we may not see what is holding this frame to the wall, but we are sure that there is something fixing it there. Maybe a nail, some rope, some glue, but definitely something.

Or, if we see the hands of a watch moving, we can be sure that there is a small hidden motor, because the hands do not move by themselves. Finally, if we see light in a room, there must be a source for this light: a lamp or the sun. In short, for every effect there must be a cause, even if our eyes or our other senses do not see this cause.

Rabbits don't come out of hats

But we must go still further and see that this cause must be greater than its effect.

Let me explain. The light in the room cannot be brighter than the light source. The lamp or the sun will always be brighter than the room it illuminates. Otherwise, we fall back into magic, into effects without a cause. Only the superior can explain the inferior. Rabbits don't come out of hats; there's always a magician's trick!



So if I'm in an extremely bright room and I only see a 30 watt bulb, it's not that more light has come out of nowhere; it's definitely that there must be another source of light that I do not know yet. Otherwise, more would come out of less, and that's as stupid as saying that something comes out of nothing, that the rabbit comes out of the hat. It is the destruction of all logic and all science.

If we sometimes have the impression that more comes out of less, it is because there are always other causes that we do not see well. A tree grows from a seed, but not just from a seed! And if man is from stardust, then he certainly isn't just from stardust either, just like a phone isn't just from a machine and some metal, but needed many designers, engineers and designers for machines to make it!

But when I look at nature which is so complex and marvelously organized, when I look at man who is alive, conscious and intelligent, is it rational to say that all of this comes from nothing, that all of this comes only from chance and of matter?

What? Order comes from disorder? Life would come from the non-living? Consciousness and intelligence would come from matter which is neither conscious nor intelligent? Isn't it strange to think that it would have taken less intelligence to create the universe than it does to understand it?

Crazier than magic

To say such a thing is to affirm that the more would come from the less, that something would come from nothing, that the universe would appear without cause, as if by magic, like a rabbit coming out of a bag. Even crazier than magic, because at least in magic there is something; there is a magician!

"Believing in chance as the cause of everything beautiful and organized in the world is basically less rational than thinking that a powerful and intelligent being called 'God' is behind it all."

To talk like that is to talk irrationally and unscientifically. Again, only the superior can fully explain the inferior. We can not emphasize this enough.

We can say that we do not know the cause perfectly, but we cannot deny that there is a cause and that this cause must be superior to what it produces.

Now, God is precisely this cause that we certainly know imperfectly, but that we know all the same as the creator at the origin of the whole universe, the great artist who is more alive, more conscious , smarter and more beautiful than all the works He creates.

There are several other ways to discover that God exists, and we could take the time to answer several good objections. But, in the end, we always come back to this basic principle: every effect must have a superior cause; the more does not come out of the less or, as the philosophers say: being does not come from nothingness. And you don't need a doctorate to understand that!

The most logical position

To say that God exists is neither unscientific nor irrational. It is not a belief of the past. On the contrary, it is the most logical and intelligent position that can be defended today and always. In a way, it takes more faith to be an atheist: you have to accept to believe the impossible!

I have always marveled at the fact that throughout history, and still today, almost all of the greatest thinkers and scientists have recognized the existence of God. Louis Pasteur said: "A little science distances you from God, but a lot of science brings you nearer to Him."

As Albert Einstein once said, "Every scientist must have some sort of religious feeling, because he cannot imagine that he is the first to conceive of the incredibly delicate facts he observes. In the unimaginable universe is revealed an infinitely superior intelligence." ❖

Simon Lessard

Who is God? God is love!

He created us out of love, to share his divinity with us

***by* Alain Pilote**

In the previous article, it was demonstrated that by simple reasoning, one can prove the existence of God, and that science properly understood, far from contradicting the existence of God, only supports it. There must be a first cause; the world cannot be due to chance.

In other words, faith and reason do not contradict each other, since both have truth as their object. As Saint Pope John Paul II wrote at the very beginning of his encyclical letter *Fides et ratio*, in 1988:

"Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves."

Indeed, continues Saint John Paul II, it is characteristic of human beings, from the very beginnings of civilization, to ask themselves the following questions: "Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?" It is one thing to recognize that God exists, but who is this God? Is it an energy, a cosmic force, or a person, a being endowed with reason, with whom one can establish a personal relationship? And as the Christian faith affirms, is this God one in three persons?

This is the challenge that the Church must face today, in what is called the "new evangelization": the ignorance and indifference of a majority of people, the existence of peoples who have already been Christians, but who now seem to reject God and his Church altogether. What once seemed obvious no longer seems so today: if we go back a few decades, it was still the majority of people who practiced their faith and went to church, but today religious practice (going to church) varies between 1 and 5 percent of the population.



What must we believe? What is taught in the Apostles' Creed, or Profession of Faith: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord..."

Should we be surprised? The fact is that the majority of people do not deepen their faith, or make no effort to learn it. And so they develop all kinds of prejudices against the Church, not knowing that it is necessary for their eternal salvation, not even knowing that they have a soul which needs God's help to be saved.

The problem of atheism

One can read in the document of the Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et Spes* (joy and hope) on the Church and the world of this time, in paragraph 19, concerning atheism:

"The root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin, man is already invited to converse with God. For man would not exist were he not created by Gods love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love, and devotes himself to His Creator. Still, many of our contemporaries have never recognized this intimate and vital link with God, or have explicitly rejected it. Thus atheism must be accounted among the most serious problems of this age, and is deserving of closer examination.

"The word atheism is applied to phenomena which are quite distinct from one another. For while God is expressly denied by some, others believe that man can assert absolutely nothing about Him. (*This is agnosticism*.) Still others use such a method to scrutinize the question of God as to make it seem devoid of meaning…

"Some form for themselves such a fallacious idea of God that when they repudiate this figment, they are by no means rejecting the God of the Gospel. Some never get to the point of raising questions about God, since they seem to experience no religious stirrings, nor do they see why they should trouble themselves about religion. (*This is indifference, which causes people to say, "Jesus or the Church, I don't care!"*) **"Moreover, atheism results not rarely from a violent protest against the evil in this world."** (*Several indeed stumble over this reasoning: "If God exists and that He is good, then why the evil, the suffering in the world?" We will see the answer a little further in this article.*)

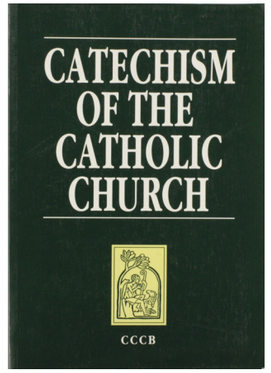
"Believers can have more than a little to do with the birth of atheism. To the extent that they neglect their own training in the faith, or teach erroneous doctrine, or are deficient in their religious, moral or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion." (*In other words, atheism is often caused by bad witness from Catholics themselves, which contradicts the teaching of Jesus.*)

In fact, a large proportion of people who profess atheism (those who deny the existence of God) or agnosticism (those who claim that one cannot know anything about God) do so out of ignorance, much like one can read in the Letter of Saint Jude: They blaspheme everything they do not know (cf 1, 10).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

This is why it is urgent and of the first importance for all Catholic homes to obtain the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992 — without a doubt the greatest heritage that Saint John Paul II left to the Church. Headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the project took 6 years to complete and involved a team of 12 cardinals and bishops. The Catechism encompasses everything that a Catholic must believe and practice. It follows the four traditional divisions found in The Catechism of the Council of Trent: the profession of faith (the Creed), the celebration of Christian mystery (the Seven Sacraments), life in Christ (the 10 Commandments) and Christian prayer (The Lord's Prayer). There is a condensed version of this catechism, in the form of questions and answers, called Youcat.

What can also help to deepen our faith is to attend fundamental retreats (on the basics of faith). It





Right: John Paul II signing the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, in the presence of Cardinal Ratzinger

is on one such retreat, which the office staff of MICHAEL recently attended, that this article is based.

By studying this catechism, we can conclude that everything was done by God out of love, and that the whole plan of God can be explained by this logic of love. Saint John defines God by this single word: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). God didn't have to create the world or human beings; He did it out of love. He wants to share His joy — and even His divine life — with us. It is because God is love that He is one God in three persons: He cannot be solitary. God's knowledge of Himself is the Word — the Son, and this love of the Father for the Son is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

In the Youcat Catechism, the first questions and answers read as follows:

1. *For what purpose are we here on earth?*

We are here on earth in order to know and to love God, to do good according to His will, and to go someday to heaven.

2. *Why did God create us?*

God created us out of free and unselfish love.

5. *Why do people deny that God exists, if they can know him by reason?*

To know the invisible God is a great challenge for the human mind. Many are scared off by it. Another reason why some do not want to know God is because they would then have to change their life. Anyone who says that the question about God is meaningless because it cannot be answered is making things too easy for himself.

The issue of evil

To the question mentioned above, namely why God, who is good, allows the existence of evil, it is simply to draw a greater good out of it — a mystery that is of course beyond our understanding, and ▶

that only God can realize. We read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, numbers 309 to 313, under the title "Providence and the scandal of evil":

"Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned. Thus has moral evil, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil, entered the world. God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it, however, because He respects the freedom of His creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it:

"For Almighty God... because He is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in His works if He were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself" (St. Augustine).

"In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures: 'It was not you,' said Joseph to his brothers, 'who sent me here, but God... You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive.' (Gen 45:8; 50:20)

"From the greatest moral evil ever committed–the rejection and murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men–God, by His grace that 'abounded all the more' (Cf. Rom 5:2), brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. But for all that, evil never becomes a good."

Saint Paul wrote: "We know that in everything God works for good for those who love Him." St. Catherine of Siena said to "those who are scandalized and rebel against what happens to them": "Everything comes from love, all is ordained for the salvation of man. God does nothing without this goal in mind."

God knew in creating man and woman that they would sin, since He had given them freedom. But, in His love, God did not abandon human beings in sin and death, He sent His own Son to earth, the image of the Father, thus making the invisible God visible (Col 1:15). Why did the Son of God become man and agree to die on the cross? Out of love for each one of us.



"... I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints..."

If sin came through Adam, Jesus is the new Adam, who came to save us from sin. In the Book of Genesis, it says that Eve came out, was pulled from the side of Adam. On the cross, the Church, the bride of Christ, came out from the side of Jesus, when He was pierced by the spear, and water and blood came out. Jesus is the head of the Church, and all the baptized are the body of the Church, her members. If the Church is the Bride, Jesus is the Bridegroom. At Mass, before Communion, the priest says: "Blessed are the guests at the wedding feast of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). Jesus is the Lamb, the Bridegroom. Saint Ambrose also describes the reception of Holy Communion as being the kiss of the Bridegroom.

We strongly encourage you to read and study the Catechism, which truly contains a treasure full of riches to meditate upon. ❖

Alain Pilote

Make sure MICHAEL moves with you

If you have recently moved, or are about to, please send your new address in order to save us postage, being undeliverable magazines are returned to us and we are required to pay extra costs. Thank you.

Money, or credit, is a social instrument

and society should issue it

***by* Louis Even**



Louis Even at our 1955 Congress in Quebec City

Let us say that I am a farmer who needs a hired hand to help me in my work. Lacking money to pay him, we might arrive at an agreement in which I compensate him with something other than money.

I could agree to give him 10 pounds of potatoes, 3 pounds of meat, 1 pound of butter and 1 gallon of milk for every day he works for me. The products, of course, will have been produced on my farm.

I could also estimate the value of his work in dollars without actually paying him. Each day I could sign a voucher with which he could choose from among the many products on my farm to the value of $5 for each hour he worked.

However, I cannot sign vouchers that allow him to choose from products made by other farmers or by other craftsmen in town. I can only give him claim to those things which belong to me.

If I paid him in dollars — well, that would be a different story. He could then select goods or services from any source anywhere in the country.

The difference between money and a voucher issued by me is that my voucher only gives him a right to those things which are mine. Whereas, money will give him a right to the products of others, as well as mine.

I can use vouchers for my own products because I own them. I cannot issue or create money for my helper because I do not own anyone else's products.

The voucher and the money can both be made of the same sized paper. Both can bear the same numbers —my voucher can say "$10", just as a $10 note issued by the Bank of Canada says "$10". But my voucher can only buy my products whereas the $10 note can buy any goods or services anywhere in the country.

A social instrument

All of this is just a way of saying that money is a social instrument. Since it gives a claim to everyone's goods and services, it cannot justifiably be issued by an individual or by private corporations. This would amount to attributing to oneself the right to dispose of products made by other people.

And yet new money must begin somewhere and must be created. The money that is already in circulation certainly did not fall like manna from heaven. It did not come into being by spontaneous generation. Similarly, when production increased, the volume of money in circulation must necessarily have increased. Present-day industry and commerce would be paralyzed if there was not more money in Canada than there was during the time of Champlain in the 1600's!

The money supply increased and new money was added. Since industrial activity increased so there must have been an increase in the money supply. Where did the additional money come from since we have established that a private individual or group of private individuals do not have the authority to issue claims on the property of others?

This new money — this increase in the money supply — must come from society itself, through the agency of an entity established to fulfill this function on society's behalf.

Who today fulfills this social function? It is not the government, since the government has no money to spend except for what it obtains through taxes or loans and which it eventually must repay through tax increases.

Money is created by the banks

A small part of modern money is made up of coins and banknotes. The greatest portion, by far, ▶

is made up of credit existing in bank ledgers.

Everyone understands this. What is not well understood is that there are two types of bank accounts. The first is a Savings Account. In this case, a depositor comes to the bank to deposit his own money into his Savings Account. The other, a Loan Account, is opened by a borrower, who asks the bank to deposit money into the account for him.

There is a huge difference between these two kinds of accounts. With a Savings Account, your own money is taken to the bank. The banker puts your money in his vault and adds the amount to your credit balance You may use this money/credit however you wish — including by writing checks, which, though not the banknotes or coins you brought to the bank, are money just the same.

What about the borrower's Loan Account? The borrower did not bring any money to the bank. He went to ask for money from the bank. Usually the sum is large, let us say something like $50,000. The banker will not reach into his till and count out $50,000 in hard cash to give to the borrower. Even the borrower would hesitate before leaving the bank with such a large sum of money in his possession. What the borrower wants is to have $50,000 to his credit in his Loan Account. He can then write checks, etc. according to his needs.

Notice that the banker did not remove even one penny from his till! The borrower, similarly, did not bring even one penny to the bank. Neither was anyone else's bank account touched in any way.

In the case of the depositor, there was a transformation. The hard cash was locked up in the banker's till and became financial credit, which appeared as figures in the depositor's Savings Account. Not one additional penny was put into circulation in this transaction.

In the case of the borrower there was no such transformation. The borrower did not bring any money into the bank and nothing was taken from either the vault, the till or from any other depositor's account. There is now in the bank's ledger, to the credit of the borrower, a new sum of money which did not exist before.

The banker has just engaged in the "creation of money". It is a creation of credit or "bank book" money. This money is just as good as any other money since the borrower can write checks from it in the same way that the depositor can draw on the money that he deposited.

With this new money, the borrower can pay for work, materials, goods—the work of others, the materials of others, the goods of others, etc.

By creating $50,000 for the borrower the banker has given the account holder the right to draw upon the production of others. It is not the production of the banker that the account holder can now access but upon all the production in the country. The banker, who does not own even one bit of the production of the nation, has nevertheless given the borrower a claim to everyone's products in the country.

We can call this the illegitimate use of a social function. Only society as a whole can, in justice, accomplish this function; a function which society may very well entrust to a competent entity under its own control. It is unacceptable that so important a social function be delegated to a private institution who only traffics it for their own profit.

A sovereign power over economic life

The borrower, after an interval of time, must repay to the bank the money which had been created for him. When this money returns to the bank it ceases to exist and is no longer in circulation; the money is canceled. In order to put more money into circulation, another loan would be required; another creation of "bank book" money.

Loans, therefore, put money into circulation and the repayment of loans withdraws money from circulation.

In a given period — let us say, one year — if the sum of bank loans is greater than the sum of the repayments made, then the volume of money in circulation will have increased. If, on the contrary, the banks have granted fewer loans while still demanding repayment at the same rate as previously, then the volume of money in circulation decreases. This is what is known as the restriction of credit.

Since the banker charges interest on his loans, every repayment entails the return of more money than was originally issued in the loan. The result is that, in order to maintain a volume of money in circulation, it is necessary to have more loans issued than repayments made.

As it is necessary to repay to the bank more money than was issued individuals and institutions must seek new loans; hence an ever-increasing debt. It would not be long before the amount of money in circulation would dry up completely without new loans being issued. This function of the banker therefore confers upon him supreme power over the economic life of the country. He is more powerful than the government, for he has the power to grant, refuse and regulate credit, which is the very life-blood of any country's economy.

Statesmen in Europe, the United States and Canada openly denounced the supremacy of the banking system. Canada's Prime Minister Mackenzie King, in 1935, said that as long as this power remained unbroken, it was futile to speak of democracy and the sovereignty of Parliament. There have been those who, like him, promised to restore to the nation the control of its money and credit. Others, like former Canadian Finance Minister Donald Fleming, publicly attacked the arbitrary and harmful actions of the top bankers.

Yet none of these men were able to effect any change. Politicians who are most vocal in their attacks on the money power will never change anything as long as the people themselves have not united to form a power base greater than that of the financiers; a power that will force the government to take action.

This is not a matter to be settled by elections. It is a question of forming a large enough group of enlightened and determined citizens who will make themselves heard by their government, regardless of what party is in office.

It is also a matter for divine assistance, since the enemy has a diabolical nature, and the money dictatorship is only one of its multiple faces. This is what the Social Creditors of the Michael Journal have understood and understand more and more. ❖

Louis Even

Canadian Tire is a well-known retailer in Canada, with over 1,000 stores throughout the country. Since 1958, as a loyalty program to their customers, they have issued rebate coupons (cash bonuses) which resemble real Canadian currency. Customers refer to these bills as "Canadian Tire money". The only difference between these bonus-coupons and the Bank of Canada notes is that on the "Canadian Tire money" it is written, "Redeemable in merchandise only at Canadian Tire stores." The Bank of Canada notes, on the other hand, allow buyers access to all the goods and services offered throughout the entire country. Exactly like the example given of the farmer at the beginning of this article, Canadian Tire has the right to issue these "coupons" because they are the owners of the products sold in their stores. In 2018, Canadian Tire announced that it was moving to "Triangle", a card-based rewards program. However, consumers who do not have the card will still be able to earn paper Canadian Tire Money.

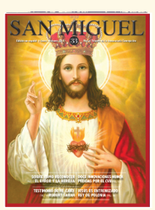












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The Bank of Canada does not fulfill its function

***by* Alain Pilote**

In the previous article, Mr. Even writes: **"Because money gives a claim to everyone's products, it cannot justifiably be created by an individual or by private corporations. It would amount to attributing to oneself the right to dispose of products made by other people. Yet, new money must begin somewhere... New money, the increase in monetary volume, may not come from any other source that society itself, through the agency of an organism that is established to fulfill this function on behalf of society."**

This organism could just as well be the Bank of Canada, the country's central bank; all it needs is to be given the proper mandate. The Bank of Canada was created in 1934 by a law of the Canadian Government. Since 1938, the Canadian Government holds 100% of the capital stock of the Bank of Canada. Of all G-8 countries, it is the only central bank that is not privately owned.

The Bank of Canada Act is reviewed every ten years, the last revision was done on December 16, 2014. A summary of its functions can be found in the preamble:

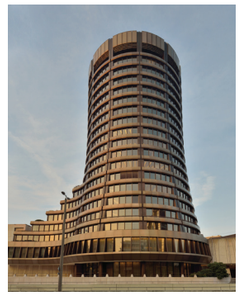
"It is desirable to establish a central bank in Canada to regulate credit and currency in the best interests of the economic life of the nation, to control and protect the external value of the national monetary unit and to mitigate by its influence fluctuations in the general level of production, trade, prices and employment, so far as may be possible within the scope of monetary action, and generally to promote the economic and financial welfare of Canada. "

Article 18(j) of the same law states:

"The Bank may make loans to the Government of Canada or the government of any province, but such loans outstanding at any one time shall not, in the case of the Government of Canada, exceed one-third of the estimated revenue of the Government of Canada for its fiscal year, and shall not, in the case of a provincial government, exceed one-fourth of that government's estimated revenue for its fiscal year, and such loans shall be repaid before the end of the first quarter after the end of the fiscal year of the government that has contracted the loan."

The Bank of Canada has therefore the power to finance, without interest, the country's many developments. (Even if it were to charge a very small interest, this would be returned to the Canadian Government since it is the Bank's only shareholder, making it the same as an interest-free loan.) The Bank of Canada has the power to do this but does not do so. Or to be more precise, it does not do so anymore.

In fact, it has been established that between 1939 and 1974, The Bank of Canada financed, without interest, as much as half of the country's financial needs. (*See the following article on page 12.*) The Government thus succeeded in financing several extensive public projects, including the building of fighter planes during and after WW II, education support for the soldiers upon their return, family allowances, old age pensions, the Trans Canada Highway, the St Lawrence Seaway and medicare for all Canadians.



A change in policy was imposed in 1974 on the countries' central banks by the Bank for International Settlements (the bank of central banks), based in Basel, Switzerland (*see photo at right*). Under the pretext that direct financing, free of interest, of a country by its own central bank might create inflation, it was recommended that countries be financed by private creditors, i.e. commercial banks. It is precisely from this time on that the debts of all Western countries began to grow exponentially.

Why pay interests to private banks for something the government can do itself, interest free, by using its own central bank? This is a financial coup, a swindle of the worst kind.

Passed into law

Some countries went so far as to pass into their laws this prohibition of using their own central bank, under the guise of "maintaining the stability of the currency". This is what happened in France in January of 1973: the then Minister of Finance, Valery Giscard D'Estaing (under the presidency of Pompidou who was previously Director of the Rothschild Bank), modified the statutes of the Bank of France through Law 73-7, forbidding the Bank of France to advance or lend money to the State. (This Law is sometimes refered to as the Pompidou-Giscard Law or the Rothschild Law.)

From 1945 to 1973, a period referred to as the "glorious thirty", the financing of the French State, as well as other institutions, was done directly through the Bank of France, without any interest to pay because the Bank of France belonged to the State. In voting in the Law of January 2, 1973, France inhibited itself from having the power to finance itself directly from the Bank of France and is now compelled to finance itself through private banks at market rates.



The seat of the ECB in Frankfurt, Germany

The principles of this 1973 Law would later be extended to all Europe, with the introduction of the European Union in 1992, and the advent of a single currency, the euro. The same Valery Giscard D'Estaing, who took part in the writing the "Rothschild law" in 1973, would also contribute to the writing of the Maastricht Treaty, dated February 7, 1992, repeated word for word in Article 123 of the Lisbon Treaty, dated December 13, 2007, that deals with the European Constitution. Article 123 states:

"Overdraft facilities or any other type of credit facility with the European Central Bank or with the central banks of the Member States (hereinafter referred to as 'national central banks') in favour of Union institutions, bodies, offices or agencies, central governments, regional, local or other public authorities, other bodies governed by public law, or public undertakings of Member States shall be prohibited, as shall the purchase directly from them by the European Central Bank or national central banks of debt instruments."

In other words, all the nations that signed the Lisbon Treaty have agreed not to finance themselves directly, at zero interest rate, through their central bank or the ECB, through Europe's Central Bank. They must call upon private banks that decide the rate of interest charged, all the while financing themselves, at almost zero interest, through the European Central Bank.

In an article written in 1960 entitled "Our bad servant, the Bank of Canada", Louis Even wrote: **"One may wonder whether the network of central banks, which has slowly invested all countries in the last decades, more recently headed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, was not designed mostly to facilitate the control of the economic life of all nations through a universal monopoly of credit."** Mr. Even was already aware of what was to come.

And Mr. Even would also denounce the fact that when questioned on the policy of the Bank of Canada, the Minister of Finance would always hide behind this answer: "The Bank of Canada is independent and the Government can in no way influence it."

In fact, it is the duty of the sovereign government of a nation to dictate the monetary policy of the country. It does not mean governments issuing money at their whim, or of replacing a banking monopoly with a state monopoly. In a Social Credit system, money would be created by an independent monetary organism a National Credit Office. (In Canada, the Bank of Canada could fulfill this purpose if ordered to do so.) This National Credit Office would have the mandate to establish an accurate accounting system, where money would be the true reflection, the exact financial expression of economic realities, reflecting the statistics production and consumption, through a purchasing power guaranteed to all by a periodic dividend, and a discount applied to all sales so that prices may be adjusted to the total purchasing power available to consumers.



In the spring of 1939, Graham Towers, then governor of the Bank of Canada (*photo at right*), testified before the Canadian Committee on Banking and Commerce. He was asked the following question:

"Will you tell me why a government with the power to create money should give that power away to a private monopoly and then borrow that which Parliament can create itself, back at interest, to the point of national bankruptcy?"

Towers answered: **"Now, if parliament wants to change the form of operating the banking system, then certainly that is within the power of parliament."**

Why do Canadians allow private banks to profit from public debt when legally the Bank of Canada must guarantee interest-free loans as it did during the Great Depression and World War II? This is an absurd situation, which must be corrected urgently. And to achieve this result, the population must be informed. This is what MICHAEL strives to do. ❖

Alain Pilote

Money must be created by the island's inhabitants for exchanges among the island's inhabitants!

The following article, written by Mrs. Gilberte Côté-Mercier, is a summary of Louis Even's tale, "The Money Myth Exploded", which helps us understand how money today is created as a debt by private banks, whereas social money can be created debt-free by society.

***by* Gilberte Côté-Mercier**

Let us imagine that 10 men lived on an isolated island inaccessible to the rest of the world.

The men were good workers and they successfully exploited the island's riches.

Everyone plied a trade. Peter tilled the land, Louis bred animals, etc.

One day, Peter, who was tired of eating only his crops, asked Louis to trade a calf for some potatoes.

Peter: "Louis, can you sell me a calf?"

Louis: "What will you give me in return?"

Peter: "Twenty bags of potatoes."

Louis: "I am not interested in potatoes; I don't eat them."

Peter resigned himself to eating potatoes. Louis, however, had too many calves and would have liked to have traded his livestock for products that he actually wanted.

It was the same situation each time one of the men wanted to trade with the others. Either it was difficult to match tastes, or it was not the right time or it was impossible to make the calculations. Often, it would have been necessary to cut a calf in two to complete an exchange.

Seeing the difficulties they had in trying to make mutually agreeable arrangements, the 10 men gathered to discuss the problem.

They noted that the island provided them with everything they wanted; it was not wealth that was lacking, nor work, but something else.

Everyone agreed that money was lacking on the island.

* * *

The men were practical and had common sense. They had determined the problem was that they lacked money to facilitate exchanges, and so they decided to create money.

They did not act like our governments who



conclude that an increase in taxes or a war are the solution when there is a lack of money.

Rather, they reasoned logically: "Money is lacking. Therefore, let us create some money for ourselves."

They did not think about going elsewhere to create money. They did not ask spirits from another world nor men from other countries to create money for them. Rather, they decided to create it themselves, for themselves.

Peter said: "James was formerly a bank manager. He knows very well how to count. James, please create money for us."

James: "Fine! I will create money for you. How much money do you need on the island so that business can be facilitated?"

Peter: "If we had $1,000 on the island, then exchanges could be completed easily. Please create $1,000; $100 for each of us."

James got down to work. He took a book, wrote Peter's name and beside it he wrote that $100 in credit was available to him. Then, he handed Peter the credit book, and said:

"Here is $100 for you, Peter. It is money made up of figures, of numbers; the most modern money. This money cannot be lost or stolen. I am lending you $100. You will pay it back to me at the end of the year, plus an additional $7 in interest."

Peter was incredulous: "Why are YOU lending ME $100? You want me to pay back $100, and on top of that, interest! You must be joking, James! It is as if the money that you create would belong to you since you want me to pay it back to you. You are mistaken, James. We asked you to create money for us, not create money for you. You will receive your share of $100 like the others, but the total $1,000 does not belong to you. If you lend $100 to each of us with the obligation to pay it back to you, it is as if the $1,000 was yours!"

James: "But, that is the way money is created in modern nations!"

Peter sarcastically replied: "Oh! It is undoubtedly for this reason that living is so nice in civilized countries, where one can die of hunger when there is such abundance, and where war ultimately settles matters. Well, that type of society does not interest us, James. You will create money for all; for everyone. It means that you will create $100 for each one of us which you will simply give us."

James understood. He gave each man a credit book with $100 noted in the credit column.

On the island, they called the $100 a dividend. It was based on the island's production, and it was brand new money that came from James' pen. The money was necessary for the island's inhabitants in order to exchange their products.

The following year was a great success. There were no longer arguments when trading goods.

Business prospered so much that the $1,000 in circulation was not enough to purchase all that was produced on the island as production had greatly increased.

* * *

At the end of the year, the men met again. They considered that the money which had been created at the beginning of the year had done them much good but, because of the island's growth and prosperity, they needed more money.

They asked James to create more new money for them.

Peter said: "If we had an additional $25 each, it would be sufficient for now."

James created $25 for everyone by adding this amount in the credit column of each man's book.

Peter had worked more than Louis during the past year and already had $150 noted in his credit book. He received $25 and so had a total credit available for his use of $175.



Gilberte Côté-Mercier, co-founder of MICHAEL

Louis, who had been sick during the year, had $50 in his credit book at the end of the year. He received $25 and so had a total of $75.

The $25 which was added to everyone's credit column could be called the dividend for that year. It represented the amount of the island's additional development or progress in the year.

The 10 men had created money for themselves. They did not ask a monopolist to create their money. They had more confidence in themselves, the very folk who had built the island's wealth, than in strangers who would simply exploit the island's real producers.

They created dividends to circulate, not debts to pay.

The credit which circulated on the island was a social credit, based on the production of the island and based on the confidence that the island's inhabitants had in their small society. The credit was created by the island's inhabitants for the island's inhabitants.

* * *

If Canada was this island, and it was inhabited by 38 million members, should this method to create credit not be the same? Why not? ❖

Gilberte Côté-Mercier

Is Jesus the king of your existence?

Here are excerpts from the homily given by Pope Francis on November 20, 2022 in the cathedral of Asti, in northern Italy, on the occasion of the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe:

On the cross, we see a single phrase: "This is the King of the Jews" (Lk 23:38). That is Jesus' title: he is a king. Yet as we gaze upon him, our idea of a king is turned upside down. When we try to visualize a king, what comes to mind is a powerful man seated on a throne with magnificent insignia, a sceptre in his hand and precious rings on his fingers, speaking in solemn tones to his subjects. That, more or less, is what we imagine.

Looking at Jesus, though, we see the complete opposite. He is not comfortably enthroned, but hanging on a gibbet. The God who "casts down the mighty from their thrones" (Lk 1:52) appears as a slave executed by those in power. Appareled only with nails and thorns, stripped of everything yet rich in love, from his throne on the cross he no longer teaches the crowds by his words; he no longer lifts his hands as a teacher. He does more: pointing a finger at no one, he opens his arms to all. That is how he shows himself to be our king: with open arms.

Only by entering into his embrace do we understand: we come to realize that God went to this extreme, even to the paradox of the cross, in order to embrace every one of us, no matter how far distant we may be from him: he embraces our death, our pain, our poverty, our weakness. He embraced all of it. He became a slave so that each of us could become a son. By his becoming a slave, he purchased our sonship. He let himself be insulted and derided, so that whenever we are brought low, we will never feel alone. He let himself be stripped of his garments, so that no one would ever feel stripped of his or her rightful dignity. He ascended the cross, so that God would be present in every crucified man or woman throughout history.

This is our king, the king of the universe, for he journeyed to the furthest confines of our human experience, entered into the black hole of hatred, the black hole of abandonment, in order to bring light to every life and to embrace all reality. My brothers and sisters, this is the king whom today we acclaim! His is not a kingship easy to understand. **And the question we ought to be asking is this: Is this king of the universe also the king of my life? Do I believe in him. How can I celebrate him as the Lord of all creation, unless he also becomes the Lord of my life?**

Jesus… gives us a chance to reign in this life, if only you surrender to his meek love that proposes but never imposes, a love that always forgives you. So often we tire of forgiving; we make the sign of the cross and turn our backs on that person. Jesus never tires of forgiving, never. He always sets you on your feet; he always restores your royal dignity. Where does salvation come from? It comes from letting ourselves be loved by him, for only in this way are we freed from slavery to ourselves, from the fear of being alone, from thinking that we cannot succeed.



The throne of Jesus is His Cross

My brothers and sisters, let us often stand before the crucified Lord and allow ourselves to be loved, because those opened arms also open heaven to us, as they did to the good thief. Let us hear, addressed to us, the only words that Jesus today speaks from the cross: "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). That is what God wants to tell us whenever we let him gaze upon us. Then we realize that ours is not an "unknown God", up in the heavens, powerful and distant, but rather a God who is close: closeness is God's "style", closeness with tenderness and mercy. Tenderness and compassion; his open arms console and caress us. That is our king!

Brothers and sisters, once we have gazed upon him, what can we do? Today's Gospel sets before us two paths: faced with Jesus, there are those who become onlookers and others who get involved… All these onlookers share a refrain that the text repeats three times: "If you are a king, then save yourself!" (cf. vv. 35, 37, 39). Save yourself! That is how they insult him; they challenge him! It is precisely the opposite of what Jesus is doing: he thinks not of saving himself, but of saving them. Yet those insulting words – "save yourself!" – are contagious; they spread from the leaders to the soldiers and then to the people; the ripple of evil reaches almost everyone there. Think about it: evil is contagious. Like an infectious disease, we catch it immediately. All those people talk about Jesus, but not for a second do they empathize with him. They stand apart and talk.

The infection of indifference

Such is the lethal infection of indifference. "This has nothing to do with me." Indifference to Jesus, indifference to the sick, the poor, the destitute of the land…

Those people were indifferent. They talk about Jesus, but they do not empathize with him. This is the lethal infection of indifference; it stands aloof from the misery of others. The wave of evil always swells like this: it starts with standing apart, watching without doing anything, being unconcerned; then we think only of what has to do with us and we grow used to turning aside. It is also a danger for our faith, which withers if it remains merely a theory and is not put into practice, if we remain detached, aloof and uninvolved. Then we become "rosewater Christians", as we used to say at home. They say they believe in God and want peace, but neither pray nor care for their neighbor. Christians in name, shallow!



Like the good thief, let us be won over by the gaze of Jesus: "Lord, remember me!"

That was the evil way, there at Calvary. Yet there is another path: that of goodness. Amid all those onlookers, one person does get involved: the good thief. The others mock the Lord, but he turns to him and calls him by name: "Jesus". That is all he asks of the Lord. A fine prayer that each of us can recite daily as a path to holiness. "Jesus, remember me!"

In this way, a criminal becomes the first saint: he draws near to Jesus for an instant and the Lord keeps him at his side forever. The Gospel speaks of the good thief for our benefit: to invite us to overcome evil by refusing to remain as onlookers. Please, indifference is worse than evildoing.

So where do we begin? With trust, with calling upon God by name, exactly as the good thief did. At the end of his life, he discovered anew the fearless confidence of children, who trust, and ask, and keep asking. In confidence and trust, he admits his faults; he weeps not for himself, but in the presence of the Lord. What about us? Do we have that same trust? Do we bring to Jesus what we hold in the depths of our hearts, or do we mask ourselves before God, perhaps even with a bit of ritual and incense?

Please, this kind of "cosmetic" spirituality is tedious. Before God, our souls should be simple and unadorned, just the way they are; salvation comes from that. Those who practise confident trust, like the good thief, learn to intercede; they learn to bring to God what they see all around them, the sufferings of the world, the people they meet, and say to him, like the good thief: "Remember, Lord!" We are not in this world just to save ourselves, but to bring our brothers and sisters into the embrace of our king. Intercession, asking the Lord to remember, opens the gates of heaven. When we pray, do we intercede? "Lord, remember me, remember my family, remember this problem…" Attract the Lord's attention.

Brothers, sisters, today, from the cross, our king looks upon uswith his arms opened. It is up to us to choose whether we will be onlookers or involved. What will I be? We see the crises of the present time, the decline of faith, the lack of participation… What are we to do? Are we content to theorize and criticize, or do we roll up our sleeves, take life in hand, and pass from taking refuge in excuses to the commitment of prayer and service? All of us think we know what is wrong with society, with the world, and with the Church.

We talk about it all day long, but then what do we do? Do we soil our hands like our God, nailed to the cross? Or do we stand with hands in our pockets, as mere onlookers? Today, as Jesus, naked on the cross, unveils God and destroys every false image of his kingship, let us look to him and thus find the courage to look at ourselves, to follow the path of confident trust and intercession, and to make servants of ourselves, in order to reign with him. "Remember, Lord! Remember!" Let us make this more often our prayer. Thank you. ❖

A Providential Encounter With Pope Francis

by Yves Jacques



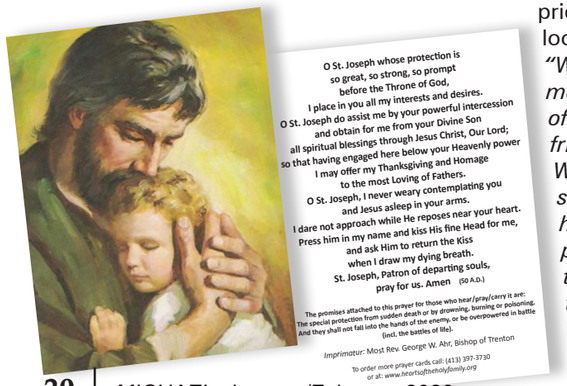
Wednesday, October 12, 2022, began as a great vacation day in Rome with my family. We were planning to visit sites that day such as Saint Mary Major Basilica, Saint John Lateran Basilica and Saint Paul Outside the Walls Basilica. Then everything changed — I believe Saint Joseph arranged a mission for me to meet Pope Francis.

I woke early that morning and decided to take a walk before breakfast and hopefully find a Mass to attend. Leaving our vacation rental, only a few blocks from the Vatican, I walked toward Saint Peter's Square and noticed a large crowd gathering near the entrance. I asked someone what the occasion was and learned it was the day of the weekly Papal Audience. I very much wanted to attend but was told that a ticket could only be obtained online and usually months in advance. In my mind I thought, *"Well, that's not going to happen today!"*

I continued my walk nearer to the Vatican. Thousands of pilgrims were gathered, including many priests and religious. A priest standing alone caught my attention and I thought he might be able to direct me to a Mass. I approached and asked if he knew where I could find a nearby Mass. He smiled and said that he wasn't sure where but was confident I would find one. "After all, this is Rome!"

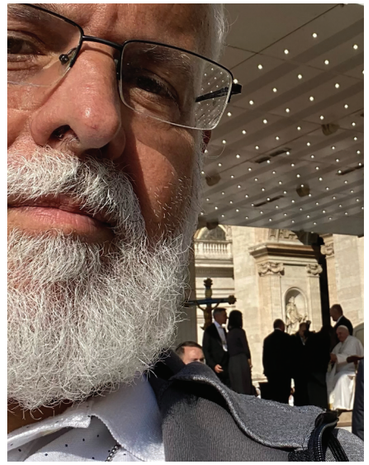
I introduced myself and said I was the father of a large family, a lay evangelist with the *Pilgrims of St. Michael* and that I have a weekly program on satellite TV called *Hearts of the Holy Family*. He told me that he was from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I became excited because I knew several bishops from the region who had attended our annual Study Session at the *House of St. Michael* in Rougemont, Canada. I named a few that he knew. I also explained that the *Pilgrims of St. Michael* work for a better tomorrow through the promotion of *Economic Democracy* and a greater understanding of *Catholic Social Teaching* to sanctify both the economy and the family.

My intention that morning had only been to enjoy a walk and I only had some images of Saint Joseph in my pocket. I like to distribute these images to anyone I meet — my calling card, as it were. On the back of the card is an ancient prayer to Saint Joseph. I gave one to the priest. He took the card, looked at me and said, *"When you approached me, I had just gotten off the phone with my friend who works at the World Bank. He was supposed to meet me here today. We were planning on attending the Papal Audience together. He called to inform me that he had to cancel in order to immediately fly back to Washington, DC for an emergency meeting. I have his ticket here with me and God is telling me that I should give it to you!"*



Totally surprised, I accepted the ticket. But then I thought about my wife, Anne Marie, who was expecting me for breakfast. I called and told her that a visiting priest from Congo had given me a ticket for the Papal Audience and asked her what I should do. She said, of course I should go and that we could meet later in the day. I joined the line at the gate and presented the ticket which I had been given. A priest in front of me saw my ticket and said, *"You are in the wrong line. Your ticket will bring you very close to the front where the Pope will speak!"* One of the Swiss Guards, seeing my ticket, escorted me to another gate and led me to the front, seating me in the second row which was occupied by bishops and cardinals.

Pope Francis soon arrived in his pope mobile. I was very excited, and was sending photos to my wife. I still couldn't believe that I was so close to Pope Francis. He spoke about discerning God's Will in our lives — it ▶



◀ was very beautiful! When the audience ended, the bishops and cardinals began to form a line to meet the pope. Although I thought I should head out to find my family, an usher came to our row and motioned for us to join the line! I certainly was not expecting this! I felt unprepared, being dressed very casually in walking clothes. I felt in my pockets and found my Rosary and the Saint Joseph Prayer cards with the ancient prayer on the back. I snapped a quick selfie with Pope Francis in the background, sent it to my wife and excitedly said, *"I'm going to greet the Pope!!!"*

As I got closer, I started to pray to the Holy Spirit to enlighten me as to what I should say to the Holy Father. I took the image of Saint Joseph in my hands and read the miraculous and ancient prayer on the reverse side. As I stepped forward to greet the Holy Father, I handed him the image of Saint Joseph and simply said, *"Holy Father, I am a friend of Saint Joseph."* He looked at me, then looked intently at the image of Saint Joseph, smiled and said, *"Please pray to Saint Joseph for me."*

These words from the Holy Father penetrated me. It was as if God Himself was speaking to my heart, giving me a mission to pray to Saint Joseph for Pope Francis. But not only for Pope Francis, **but for the papacy — for the entire Petrine Ministry.** I had left our apartment that morning with the sole intention of enjoying a walk, praying my Rosary and looking for a Mass to attend as my family had a full agenda for the day. But Saint Joseph had another plan and he sent me to meet Pope Francis that morning. Pope Francis often says that *"Our God is a God of surprises."* St. Joseph certainly had a beautiful surprise for me that day.



It is to be noted that October 12, the day on which I had my special encounter with the Holy Father, is also the feast day of the new blessed, Carlo Acutis (see the article in *MICHAEL* Jan/Feb 2021). Young Carlo said on his deathbed: *"I offer to the Lord, for the Pope and the Church, all the sufferings that I will have to endure, and also to go straight to Heaven without going through Purgatory."*

Saint Joseph has a great role to play in the Church. Today, more than ever, the Church is in peril. The enemy is not only at the gate but there are also enemies, unfortunately, within the Church itself. Saint Joseph saved Our Lord Jesus from peril as a child when he protected him from the evil King Herod. He protected the Holy Family all those years from danger, and from idols in Egypt. God the Father chose Saint Joseph to protect the Holy Family, and for that he is called the Terror of Demons. Therefore, the Church naturally turns to him for protection.

Blessed Pope Pius IX proclaimed Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church on December 8, 1870. The Pope is the visible leader of the Holy Catholic Church on earth and therefore, **we must call on St. Joseph to protect the Pope in his office as leader of the Church.** Saint Joseph, as Patron of the Universal Church, is patron to us all, and that includes the Pope. God the Father chose Saint Joseph to protect the Church, and especially the Pope and the papacy. The Catholic Church is the Holy Bride of Christ, and Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against her. So let us join together in praying and spreading this special prayer to Saint Joseph for the Pope and for the Church. It is clear to me that God wills it. ❖

Saint Joseph,
Terror Of Demons,
Protect the Papacy!

O St. Joseph
whose protection is so great,
so strong, so prompt
before the Throne of God,
I place in you all my interests and desires.

O St. Joseph
do assist me by your powerful intercession
and obtain for me from your Divine Son
all spiritual blessings
through Jesus Christ, Our Lord;
so that having engaged here below
your Heavenly power
I may offer my Thanksgiving and Homage
to the most Loving of Fathers.

O St. Joseph,
I never weary contemplating you
and Jesus asleep in your arms.
I dare not approach
while He reposes near your heart.

Press him in my name
and kiss His fine Head for me,
and ask Him to return the Kiss
when I draw my dying breath.
St. Joseph, Patron of departing souls
pray for us. Amen.

To order the St. Joseph prayer cards please call:
(413) 397-3730

Or write: P. O. Box 86, S. Deerfield, MA 01373
Or visit: *www.heartsoftheholyfamily.org*



Blessed John Paul I

The smiling... and humble Pope

On September 4, 2022, Pope Francis presided in Rome over the beatification ceremony of Pope John Paul I, born Albino Luciani, whose sudden death on September 28, 1978, after only 33 days of pontificate, had struck all the faithful. But despite this short reign on the See of Peter, John Paul I will have left an indelible mark in the memory of all, as much by his smile as by his humility, and his ability to transmit the message of the Christian faith in simple words.

In fact, it is not only his pontificate, but his whole life, as a priest and bishop, that the Church offers as a model to the faithful. Two days before the beatification ceremony, Cardinal Beniamino Stella, postulator of the cause of beatification of John Paul I, whom he had known personally when Luciani was his bishop in the diocese of Vittorio Veneto, declared:

"I have the best memory of him: a man of assiduous and profound prayer, of attentive listening and capable of human and spiritual support, as a pastor of priests and of the people of God, learned and prepared as a teacher of the faith and a good communicator of the Word of God, a friend and brother of priests, a visitor of the sick and an incomparable catechist."

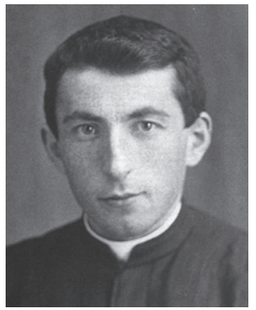
There are three stages to be canonized: venerable, blessed, then saint. First, the pope must proclaim the person in question venerable, that is, having practiced to a heroic degree the virtues of faith, hope and charity.

To access the second stage, that of blessed, a miracle must be recognized (unless the candidate died as a martyr). Public worship of a blessed is permitted but most of the time is limited to a diocese, region, or religious family.

Finally, when a second miracle is recognized, the candidate can be canonized, and therefore be declared a saint. With canonization, the sentence is final, and worship is extended to the whole Church.

By the way, it is remarkable to see that most of the recent sovereign pontiffs have received the honor of the altars: John Paul II and John XXIII were canonized (declared saints) in 2014, as well as Paul VI in 2018. Of course, all popes are called "Holy Father", but not all popes have received the honors of canonization. Of all the popes who have led the Catholic Church (Francis being the 266th pope), only 81 have been declared saints — most of whom died as martyrs during the early centuries of the Church — and only 7 of them after the 10th century, the most recent being Paul VI, canonized in 2018, John Paul II and John XXIII, canonized in 2014, and Pius X (pope from 1903 to 1914), canonized in 1954. Before him, we must go back almost 400 years to see another canonized pope, Saint Pius V, pope from 1566 to 1572. It can therefore be said that the Church has been led in recent years by exceptional figures, and that God does not abandon His Church.

And among the popes of the last 110 years, three were patriarchs (archbishops) of Venice in Italy before becoming popes: Pius X (Joseph Sarto), John XXIII (Angelo Roncalli), and John Paul I (Albino Luciani). The life of John Paul I can also be compared in several points to that of Saint Pius X: Both came from poor families in Veneto, both entered the minor and then the major seminary of their rural diocese. Immediately after their ordination, they modestly became vicars and, after a few years, they were called to the episcopal curia. Joseph Sarto was named bishop at fifty, and Albino Luciani became bishop (of Vittorio Veneto) at forty-six. Bishop Sarto became Patriarch of Venice at fifty-eight, Bishop Luciani at fifty-seven. Cardinal Sarto became pope at sixty-eight, Cardinal Luciani at sixty-five.



Albino Luciani seminarian in 1932

Albino Luciani was born on October 17, 1912 in Canale d'Agordo, northern Italy. His father, Giovanni Luciani (1872-1952), was a seasonal worker then as a mason, with anticlerical socialist tendencies. From his father's first marriage to Rosa, who died of tuberculosis in 1906, five children were born: three sons, all of whom died immediately after childbirth and to whom the same name was given: Albino, and two daughters, both deaf-mutes: Amalia (1900-1938) and Pia (1902-1969), who became a nun.

His mother, Bortola Tancon (1879-1948), Giovanni's second wife, was on the other hand a devout Catholic who worked as a dishwasher at the Saints-John and Paul asylum in Venice. Albino had two brothers and one sister: Federico (1915-1916), who died at the age of one, Edoardo (1917-2008) ▶

who married Antonietta Marinelli with whom he had nine children, and Nina (1920-2209) who married Ettore Petri with whom she will have two children.

Albino's mother encouraged her son's early vocation. For a long time, Albino Luciani kept his father's letter, which gave him permission to enter the seminary: "I hope," says the letter, "that when you become a priest you will be on the side of the poor and the workers, because Christ was on their side". Albino therefore entered the minor seminary of Feltre, then the major seminary of Belluno. A brilliant student, he then joined the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. There he obtained a doctorate in theology, dealing with "the origin of the soul in the thought of Rosmini".

Albino Luciani was ordained a priest on July 7, 1935, and appointed vicar in his hometown. He taught at the Mining Technical Institute, then at the major seminary of Belluno, where he took over the chair of dogmatic theology. He became vice-director in 1937. In 1954, he became vicar general of the diocese of Belluno.

Bishop



As Bishop of Vittorio Veneto in 1959

Appointed bishop of Vittorio Veneto in 1958, Albino Luciani was consecrated bishop in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome on December 27 of the same year by Pope John XXIII himself. With him was also consecrated Charles Msaklia, a native of Tanzania; the two new bishops remained friends.

Like Saint Charles Borromeo, Bishop Luciani chose *Humilitas* (humility) for his motto as bishop, which would indeed be a defining feature of the rest of his life. In his years as episcopate in Vittorio Veneto, Bishop Luciani first showed unequaled gifts as a catechist, for his ability to be understood by all, even by children and people of little culture, for his clarity in the presentation, his capacity for synthesis, and his tendency to avoid speeches and difficult readings, despite his deep culture. He also recommended the same to his priests.

Patriarch and cardinal

On December 15, 1969, Archbishop Luciani became Patriarch (Archbishop) of Venice. Three years later, he took the vice-presidency of the Italian episcopal conference. On September 16, 1972, Patriarch Luciani received Pope Paul VI on a pastoral visit in



Archbishop Luciani with Paul VI in Venice in 1972

Venice. At the end of the Mass in Piazza San Marco, in front of twenty thousand people, Paul VI took off his papal stole and laid it on the shoulders of Archbishop Luciani, in a gesture that seemed to be that of an investiture, saying to him: "You deserve it." Five months later, Luciani was created cardinal by Paul VI.

In January 1976, Bishop Luciani published *Illustrissimi* ("To the Illustrious Ones"), a collection of 40 imaginary letters (written between 1971 and 1975 and published monthly in the magazine "Il Messaggero di S. Antonio") addressed to saints, historical or literary personalities. The book was a great success and has been translated into many languages.

Albino Luciani becomes pope

Cardinal Luciani left Venice for the last time on August 10, 1978, for the conclave which was to elect the successor of Paul VI. The conclave was very quick, ending after only four votes, which took place on the same day, and at 7:18 p.m. on August 26, 1978, the windows of the central loggia of the Vatican Basilica opened.

Immediately afterwards, the large red cloth with the papal coat of arms appears at the loggia, and Cardinal Protodeacon Pericle Felici announced in Latin the famous formula *Habemus Papam* (We have a Pope): Cardinal Albino Luciani… "*qui sibi nomen imposuit Ioannis Pauli Primi*" (who took the name of John Paul the First). Luciani had obtained 101 votes out of 111 in the fourth vote.

At the age of 65, Luciani took the name of John Paul I, in homage to his two immediate predecessors John XXIII, who had consecrated him a bishop, and Paul VI, who had created him a cardinal. This choice was made to everyone's surprise: you have to go back to the 10th century (with Pope Lando, who died in 914) to find a pope "inaugurating" a new reign name. Moreover, a double name (in this case, John and Paul) had never been used before.

Announcing the election with the traditional *Habemus Papam*, Cardinal Felici had also added the regnal number "I" after the name: *Ioannis Pauli Primi* — John Paul the First, and not just John Paul. It was Luciani himself who asked for it: in fact, normally the pontiff who chooses a pontifical name never used by one of his predecessors does not assume the ordinal number, which is only attributed to him posthumously (after his death), only when one of his successors chooses the same name. We need only think of the current pope, Francis, who himself made it clear that he wanted to be called only "Francis" and not "Francis the 1st".



John Paul I appears for the first time on the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica after his election.

His program

In his first *Urbi et Orbi* radio message on Sunday, August 27, 1978, John Paul I defined the program of his pontificate as follows:

— We wish to preserve the integrity of the great discipline of the Church in the life of priests and of the faithful. It is a rich treasure in history. Throughout the ages, it has presented an example of holiness and heroism, both in the exercise of the evangelical virtues and in service to the poor, the humble, the defenceless. To achieve that, we place a priority on the revision of the two codes of canon law; that of the oriental tradition and that of the Latin tradition to assure the blessed liberty of the children of God, through the solidarity and firmness of juridical structures.

— We wish to remind the entire Church that its first duty is that of evangelization. Our Predecessor, Paul VI, presented the directions for this in his memorable document: animated by faith, nourished by the Word of God, and strengthened by the heavenly food of the Eucharist, one should study every way, seek every means "in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2), to spread the Word, to proclaim the message, to announce that salvation which creates in the soul a restlessness to pursue truth and, at the same time, offers strength from above. If all the sons and daughters of the Church know how to be tireless missionaries of the Gospel, a new flowering of holiness and renewal would spring up in this world that thirsts for love and for truth.



The first Angelus

Here is how John Paul I described the day of his election, and the feelings animating it, during the Angelus of August 27, 1978:

"Yesterday morning I went to the Sistine Chapel to vote tranquilly. Never could I have imagined what was about to happen. As soon as the danger for me had begun, the two colleagues who were beside me whispered words of encouragement. One said: 'Courage! If the Lord gives a burden, he also gives the strength to carry it.' Another colleague said: 'Don't be afraid; there are so many people in the whole world who are praying for the new pope.' When the moment of decision came, I accepted.

"Then there was the question of the name, for they also ask what name you wish to take, and I had thought little about it. My thoughts ran along these lines: Pope John had decided to consecrate me himself in St Peter's Basilica. Then, however unworthy, I succeeded him in Venice on the Chair of St Mark, in that Venice which is still full of Pope John. He is remembered by the gondoliers, the Sisters, everyone.

"Then Pope Paul not only made me a cardinal, but some months earlier, on the wide footbridge in St Mark's Square, he made me blush to the roots of my hair in the presence of 20,000 people, because he removed his stole and placed it on my shoulders. Never have I blushed so much! Furthermore, dur-

ing his fifteen years of pontificate, this Pope has shown, not only to me but to the whole world, how to love, how to serve, how to labour and to suffer for the Church of Christ.

"For that reason I said: 'I shall be called John Paul.' I have neither the 'wisdom of the heart' of Pope John, nor the preparation and culture of Pope Paul, but I am in their place. I must seek to serve the Church. I hope that you will help me with your prayers."

From the very beginning of his pontificate, John Paul I strived to humanize the pontifical office by expressing himself in the first person (I), abandoning the "we" of majesty. Similarly, he refused, on the day of his enthronement, to wear the tiara, to which he preferred a simple bishop's miter and the presentation of the pallium.



The first Wednesday audience

John Paul I was immediately loved by Catholics, touched by his simplicity, who nicknamed him "the smiling pope", and by his style of preaching which, while remaining simple, touched hearts. Here, for example, are excerpts from his first "catechesis," or Wednesday audience as pope, on September 6, 1978, which he concluded by emphasizing the importance of remaining humble:

"Just a month ago, Paul VI died at Castelgandolfo. In fifteen years he rendered enormous service to the Church. The effects are partly seen now already, but I think that they will be seen especially in the future. Every Wednesday he came here and spoke to the people. At the 1977 Synod, several bishops said: 'Pope Paul's Wednesday addresses are a real catechesis adapted to the modern world.' I will try to imitate him, in the hope that I, too, will be able, somehow, to help people to become better.

"To be good, however, it is necessary to be in place before God, before our neighbour and before ourselves. Before God, the right position is that of Abraham, who said: "I am only dust and ashes before You, O Lord!" We must feel small before God. When I say, "Lord I believe" I am not ashamed to feel like a child before his mother; one believes in one's mother; I believe in the Lord, in what He has revealed to me.

"The Commandments are a little more difficult to observe; but God gave them to us not to satisfy a whim, not in his own interest, but solely in our interest. Once a man went to buy a motorcar from the agent. The latter talked to him plainly: 'Look here, it's a good car; mind that you treat it well: premium petrol in the tank, and for the joints, oil the good stuff.' But the other replied: 'Oh, no, for your information, I can't stand even the smell of petrol, nor oil; I'll put champagne, which I like so much, in the tank and I'll oil the joints with jam' 'Do what you like: but don't come and complain if you end up in a ditch with your car!' The Lord did something similar with us: he gave us this body, animated by an intelligent soul, a good will. He said, 'This machine is a good one, but treat it well."

"Here are the Commandments. Honour your father and your mother; do not kill; do not get angry; be gentle; do not tell lies; do not steal... If we were able to observe the Commandments, we would be better off, and so would the world. Then there is our neighbour... But our neighbour is at three levels: some are above us; some are at our level; some are below. Above, there are our parents. The catechism said: respect them, love them, obey them. The Pope must instil respect and obedience in children for their parents. (…)

"And besides our parents, there is the State, there are superiors. May the Pope recommend obedience? Bossuet, who was a great bishop, wrote: 'Where no one commands, everyone commands. Where everyone commands, no one commands any longer, but chaos.' Sometimes something similar is seen in this world too. So let us respect those who are our superiors.

"Then there are our equals. And here, there are usually two virtues to observe: justice and charity. But charity is the soul of justice. We must love our neighbour; the Lord recommended it so much. I always recommend not only great acts of charity, but little ones. I read in a book, written by Carnegie, an American, entitled 'How to Make Friends', the following little episode:

"A lady had four men in the house: her husband, a brother, two grown-up sons. She alone had to do the shopping, the washing, the ironing and the cooking: everything all alone. One Sunday they come home. The table is laid for dinner, but on the plate there is only a handful of hay. 'Oh!', the others protest and say: 'What! Hay!' And she says, 'No, everything is ready. Let me tell you: I prepare your food, I keep you clean, I do everything. Never once have you said: That was a good dinner you made for us. But say something! I'm not made of stone.' People work more willingly when their work is recognized. These are the little acts of charity. In our home we all have some one who is waiting for a compliment.

"There are those who are smaller than we are; there are children, the sick, even sinners. As Bishop, I was very close even to those who do not believe in God. I formed the idea that they often combat not God, but the mistaken idea they have of God. How much mercy it is necessary to have! And even those who err.... We must really be in place with ourselves. I will just recommend one virtue so dear to the Lord. He said, 'Learn from Me who am meek and humble of heart.'

"I run the risk of making a blunder, but I will say it: the Lord loves humility so much that, sometimes, He permits serious sins. Why? In order that those who committed these sins may, after repenting, remain humble. One does not feel inclined to think oneself half a saint, half an angel, when one knows that one has committed serious faults. The Lord recommended it so much: be humble. Even if you have done great things, say: 'We are useless servants.' On the contrary, the tendency in all of us is rather the contrary: to show off. Lowly, lowly: this is the Christian virtue which concerns ourselves.

Faith, hope, charity

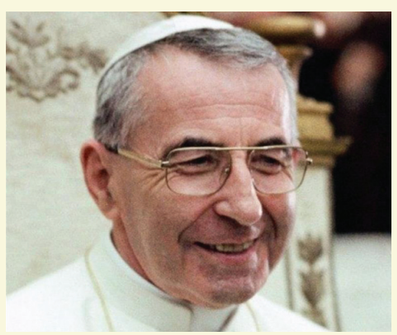
For the next three audiences, on Wednesdays September 13, 20 and 27, John Paul I developed the theme of the theological virtues, the first three virtues of the "seven lamps of sanctification", according to the expression of Pope John XXIII. Here are excerpts from the September 13 audience:

"Pope John, in a note of his, which was also published, said: 'This time I made the retreat on the Seven Lamps of Sanctification.' Seven virtues, he meant, that is, faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance. Who knows if the Holy Spirit will help the poor Pope today to illustrate at least one or these lamps, the first one, faith…

"That is what faith is: to surrender to God, by transforming one's life. A thing that is not always easy! Augustine has told of the journey of his faith; especially in the last few weeks it was terrible; while reading, one feels his soul almost shudder and wither in interior conflicts. On the one hand, God calls him and insists; on the other hand, his old habits, 'old friends', he writes, 'and they pulled me gently by my mantle of flesh, and they said to me: Augustine, what! You are abandoning us? Look out, you won't be able to do this any more; you won't be able ever again to do that other." A hard thing! 'I felt', he says, 'like one who is in bed, in the morning." He is told: "Out, Augustine, get up! Finally the Lord gave me a sharp tug, and I came out.' You see, one must not say: *'Yes, but; yes, but later.'* One must say: *'Yes, Lord! At once!'* This is faith. To respond to the Lord generously. But who says this 'yes'? He who is humble and trusts God completely!

"My mother used to tell me when I was a boy: 'When you were little, you were very ill. I had to take you from one doctor to another and watch over you whole nights. Do you believe me?' How could I have said: 'I don't believe you, Mamma? 'Of course I believe, I believe what you tell me, but I believe especially in you.' And so it is in faith. It is not just a question of believing in the things that God revealed, but in Him who deserves our faith, who has loved us so much and done so much for our sake.

"It is also difficult to accept some truths, because the truths of faith are of two kinds; some pleasant, others unpalatable to our spirit. (…) And there is a ▶



"Christ is the Head. We, the Church, are His limbs. It is not possible to have faith and to say, 'I believe in Jesus, I accept Jesus but I do not accept the Church.' We must accept the Church as she is."



last difficulty, the Church. St Paul asked: 'Who are you, Lord?' —'I am that Jesus whom you are persecuting'. A light, a flash, crossed his mind. I do not persecute Jesus, I don't even know him: I persecute the Christians. It is clear that Jesus and the Christians, Jesus and the Church are the same thing: indissoluble, inseparable.

"Read St Paul: '*Corpus Christi quod est Ecclesia*'. Christ and the Church are only one thing. Christ is the Head. We, the Church, are His limbs. It is not possible to have faith and to say, 'I believe in Jesus, I accept Jesus but I do not accept the Church.' We must accept the Church as she is. And what is this Church like? Pope John called her '*Mater et Magistra*'. Teacher also. St Paul said: 'Let everyone accept us as Christ's aids and stewards and dispensers of His mysteries.'

"When the poor Pope, when the bishops, the priests, propose the doctrine, they are merely helping Christ. It is not our doctrine; it is Christ's. We must just guard it and present it. I was present when Pope John opened the Council on October 11, 1962. At a certain point he said: 'We hope that with the Council the Church will take a leap forward.'

"We all hoped so, but a leap forward, on what way? He told us at once: on certain and immutable truths. It never even occurred to Pope John that the truths could go forward, and then, gradually, change. Those are the truths: we must walk along the way of these truths, understanding them more and more, bringing ourselves up-to-date, proposing them in a form suited to the new times. (…)

"The Church is also a mother. If she continues Christ, and Christ is good, the Church too must be good, good to everyone. But if by chance there should sometimes be bad people in the Church, we have our mother. If mother is sick, if my mother by chance should become lame, I love her even more. It is the same in the Church. If there are, and there are, defects and shortcomings, our affection for the Church must never fail. Yesterday, and I conclude, I was sent the issue of '*Città Nuova*'. I saw that they have reported, recording it, a very short address of mine, with an episode.

"A certain British preacher, named MacNabb, speaking in Hyde Park, had spoken of the Church. When he finished, someone asked to speak and said: 'Yours are fine words. But I know some Catholic priests who did not stay with the poor, and became rich. I know also Catholic husbands who have betrayed their wives. I do not like this Church made of sinners.' The Father said: 'There's something in what you say. But may I make an objection?' — 'Let's hear it.'—He says: 'Excuse me, but am I mistaken or is the collar of your shirt a little greasy?' —He says: 'Yes, it is, I admit.' —'But is it greasy because you haven't used soap, or because you used soap but it was no use?' 'No', he says, 'I haven't used soap.'

"You see. The Catholic Church too has extraordinary soap: the gospel, the sacraments, prayer. The gospel read and lived; the sacraments celebrated in the right way; prayer well used, would be a marvellous soap, capable of making us all saints. We are not all saints because we have not used this soap enough. Let us try to meet the hopes of the Popes who held and applied the Council: Pope John and Pope Paul. Let us try to improve the Church by becoming better ourselves. Each of us and the whole Church could recite the prayer I am accustomed to recite: **'Lord take me as I am, with my defects, with my shortcomings, but make me become what You want me to be.'**

His last audience

On Wednesday, September 27 — the day before his death — John Paul I granted his last general audience — and last public appearance — on the topic of charity:

"My God, with all my heart, above all things, I love You, infinite good and our eternal happiness, and for Your sake I love my neighbour as myself and forgive offences received. Oh Lord, may I love You more and more.

"This is a very well-known prayer, embellished with biblical phrases. My mother taught it to me. I



John Paul I with his secretary of State, cardinal Jean Villot

recite it several times a day even now, and I will try to explain it to you, word by word, as a parish catechist would do. We are at Pope John's 'third lamp of sanctification': charity. *I love*. (…)

"To love means travelling, rushing with one›s heart towards the object loved. *The Imitation of Christ* says: he who loves runs, flies and rejoices. To love God is therefore a journeying with one›s heart to God. A wonderful journey! When I was a boy, I was thrilled by the journeys described by Jules Verne. But the journeys of love for God are far more interesting. You read them in the lives of the saints. St. Vincent de Paul, whose feast we celebrate today, for example, is a giant of charity: he loved God more than a father and a mother, and he himself was a father for prisoners, sick people, orphans and the poor. (…)

"The journey also brings sacrifices, but these must not stop us. Jesus is on the cross: you want to kiss Him? You cannot help bending over the cross and letting yourself be pricked by a few thorns of the crown on the Lord's head (cf. St Francis de Sales *Œuvres).* You cannot cut the figure of good St. Peter, who had no difficulty in shouting 'Long live Jesus' on Mount Tabor, where there was joy, but did not even let himself be seen beside Jesus at Mount Calvary, where there was risk and suffering.

"It is easy to love some persons; difficult to love others; we do not find them likeable, they have offended us and hurt us; only if I love God in earnest can I love them as sons of God, and because He asks me to. Jesus also established how to love one's neighbour: that is, not only with feeling, but with facts. This is the way, He said. I will ask you: I was hungry in the person of my humbler brothers, did you give me food? Did you visit me, when I was sick (cf. Mt 25:34 ff).

"The catechism puts these and other words of the Bible in the double list of the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual ones. The list is not complete, and it would be necessary to update it. Among the starving, for example, today, it is no longer a question just of this or that individual; there are whole peoples.

"We all remember the great words of Pope Paul VI: 'Today the peoples in hunger are making a dramatic appeal to the peoples blessed with abundance. The Church shudders at this cry of anguish and calls each one to give a loving response of charity to this brother's cry for help" (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 3). At this point, justice is added to charity, because, Paul VI says also, 'Private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditioned right. No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, when others lack necessities' (*ibid*, 23). Consequently 'every exhausting armaments race becomes an intolerable scandal' (*ibid*, 53).

"In the light of these strong expressions, it can be seen how far we—individuals and peoples—still are from loving others 'as ourselves', as Jesus commanded. Another Commandment: *I forgive offences received*. It almost seems that the Lord gives precedence to this forgiveness over worship: 'So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go, first to be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift' (Mt 5:23-24).

"The last words of the prayer are: *Lord, may I love You more and more*. Here, too, there is obedience to a Commandment of God, who put thirst for progress in our hearts. From pile-dwellings, caves and the first huts, we have passed to houses, apartment buildings and skyscrapers; from journeys on foot, on the back of a mule or of a camel, to coaches, trains and airplanes. And people desire to progress further with more and more rapid means of transport, reaching more and more distant goals. But to love God, we have seen, is also a journey: God wants it to be more and more intense and perfect. He said to all His followers: 'You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth' (Mt 5:13-14); 'You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt 5:48). That means: to love God not a little, but so much; not to stop at the point at which we have arrived, but with his help, to progress in love.

An unexpected death

As we can see, the pontificate of John Paul I announced great things; however, his brief reign did not allow him to carry out large-scale actions. Indeed, John Paul I died on the night of September

28, 1978 of a myocardial infarction (according to the official version), two weeks before his 66th birthday. His body was found at 5 a.m. by Sister Vincenza Taffarel: sitting on his bed, the bedside lamp on, he was wearing his reading glasses and holding a few sheets of paper in his hands.

Rumors began to circulate as soon as his death was announced, amplified by the fact that the body of the late pope will never be autopsied (which would have put an end to all the rumors). Thus, in 1984, in a controversial book entitled *In God's Name*, British journalist David Yallop claimed that Pope John Paul I, wanting to put order in the Curia and in the finances of the Vatican, would have been poisoned on the orders of Cardinal Villot and Bishop Paul Marcinkus, head of the Vatican bank. We will only know the truth at the Last Judgment.



John Paul I is greeted by cardinal Karol Wojtyla, who will become a month later his successor, Pope John Paul II.

In an interview given in August 1988 to the Italian monthly magazine "Trenta Giorni", Brazilian Franciscan Cardinal Aloísio Lorscheider, a longtime friend of Cardinal Luciani, then Patriarch of Venice, said: "I am not interested in things that have been written, nor by all the literature that flourished around his (John Paul I's) death. However, I say this with sadness, suspicion remains in our hearts; it's like a bitter shadow, a question that hasn't been fully answered." And the cardinal added in the same interview that he was certain that one day John Paul I would be raised to the honors of the altars.

John Paul II and Benedict XVI

After the death of John Paul I, the Polish cardinal of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, was elected pope. Here is what he said during his first general audience, on October 25, 1978:

"When the Holy Father John Paul I spoke to participants in the General Audience on Wednesday, September 27, no one could imagine that it was for the last time. His death—after thirty-three days of pontificate—surprised the whole world and filled it with a deep sense of loss. He who brought forth such great joy in the Church and inspired such hope in men's hearts, consummated and terminated his mission, in such a short time. In his death the words so often repeated in the Gospel came true: '... be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect' (Mt 24:44). John Paul I always kept watch. The Lord's call did not take him by surprise. He followed it with the same trembling joy with which he had accepted the election to St. Peter's throne on 26 August."

And here is what Pope Benedict XVI said during the Angelus on September 28, 2008, exactly thirty years after the death of John Paul I:

"In reflecting on (today's) biblical texts, I immediately thought of Pope John Paul I, the 30th anniversary of whose death we are commemorating today. John Paul I chose as his episcopal motto the same motto as St Charles Borromeo, namely: *Humilitas*. This single word sums up the essential of Christian life and indicates the indispensable virtue of those in the Church who are called to the service of authority…

"Humility can be considered his spiritual testament. Because of this virtue of his, it only took 33 days for Pope Luciani to win people's hearts. In his addresses, he always referred to events in practical life, from his family memories and from popular wisdom. His simplicity was a vehicle for a solid, rich teaching which, thanks to the gift of an exceptional memory and a vast knowledge, he embellished with numerous citations from ecclesiastical and secular writers.

"Thus, he was an incomparable catechist, following in the footsteps of St. Pius X, who came from the same region and was his Predecessor first on the throne of St. Mark and then on that of St. Peter. 'We must feel small before God,' he said during the same audience. And he added, 'I am not ashamed to feel like a child before his mother; one believes in one's mother; I believe in the Lord, in what He has revealed to me'.

"These words reveal the full depth of his faith. As we thank God for having given him to the Church and to the world, let us treasure his example, striving to cultivate his same humility which enabled him to talk to everyone, especially the small and the 'distant'. For this, let us invoke Mary Most Holy, the humble Handmaid of the Lord."

On November 9, 2017, Pope Francis recognized the heroic virtues of John Paul I, thus declaring him venerable, the first step before beatification, which requires a miracle due to the intercession of John Paul I.

The miracle for the beatification

On October 13, 2021, Pope Francis recognized the miraculous nature of the healing of an 11-year-old Argentinian girl, Candela Cardia, in 2011 attributed to the intercession of John Paul I, and signed the decree allowing his beatification.

It is March 20, 2011. On this day, Candela begins to suffer from a violent headache which persists for a week. On March 27, she reached a new stage in pain and fever, vomiting. Behavioral and speech disorders appeared. Rushed to Paraná Hospital, she underwent a battery of tests to find out what she was suffering from. The diagnosis falls, chillingly, that Candela Giarda is suffering from "severe acute inflammatory encephalopathy, malignant refractory epilepsy and septic shock". Suffering daily from epileptic seizures, the doctors decided to intubate her. "Within hours she was in a coma, on a respirator," her mother Roxana said. "She had seizures, and none of the drugs the doctors tested worked."



Candela Cardia

Without any improvement in her state of health, Candela was transferred on May 26, 2011 to the Favaloro Foundation, in Buenos Aires, in the intensive care unit. On July 22, 2011, doctors decided to summon the family to prepare them for the possibility of imminent death. "We can't do anything else; Candela is going to die tonight," a doctor told the girl's mother that night.

Disoriented, cornered, Candela's mother decided to stop at the parish of Our Lady of Mercy in the neighborhood of Belgrano, Buenos Aires, located a few meters from the clinic. She had already met Father José Dabusti there, who very attached to the "smiling pope" and who accompanied her throughout this ordeal. "That night I came in and asked him to come to see my daughter," Roxana says. "When he approached Candela's bed, he prayed, told me to put my hands on her and entrusted her to Pope John Paul I." Their prayers were joined by those of all the nursing staff present in intensive care.



The tapestry at the balcony of St. Peter Basilica with the ^portrait of the new blessed

A few hours after having invoked John Paul I and four months after the appearance of the first symptoms, on July 23, 2011, the condition of the young girl began to evolve favorably. The medical profession noted a rapid improvement in the septic shock which continued with the subsequent restoration of "hemodynamic and respiratory stability", specified the decree. On August 8, the little girl was no longer intubated, on August 25 her epilepsy disappeared, and on September 5 Candela left the hospital with a simple prescription. She was miraculously cured.

The beatification

On September 4, 2022, John Paul I was beatified by Pope Francis in Saint Peter's Square, in the presence of around 25,000 faithful, and nearly 400 cardinals, bishops and priests who concelebrated the liturgy with the Pope. On the facade of the Vatican Basilica, one could see the tapestry with the portrait of the new blessed, made by Chinese artist Yan Zhang. The tomb of John Paul I, like that of Saint Paul VI, remains in the Vatican Grottos, under St. Peter's Basilica. The liturgical memorial for the feast of Blessed John Paul I is celebrated on August 26, the day of his election as Sovereign Pontiff.

Here, in conclusion, are a few words from Pope Francis' homily for the beatification of John Paul I:

"Dear brothers and sisters, our new Blessed lived that way: in the joy of the Gospel, without compromises, loving to the very end. He embodied the poverty of the disciple, which is not only detachment from material goods, but also victory over the temptation to put oneself at the centre, to seek one's own glory. On the contrary, following the example of Jesus, he was a meek and humble pastor. He thought of himself as dust on which God deigned to write. That is why he could say: 'The Lord recommended it so much: be humble. Even if you have done great things, say: We are useless servants' (General Audience, September 6, 1978).

"With a smile, Pope John Paul managed to communicate the goodness of the Lord… Let us pray to him, our father and our brother, and ask him to obtain for us 'the smile of the soul', a transparent smile that does not deceive, the smile of the soul. Let us pray, in his own words: 'Lord take me as I am, with my defects, with my shortcomings, but make me become what You want me to be' (General Audience, September 13, 1978). Amen. ❖

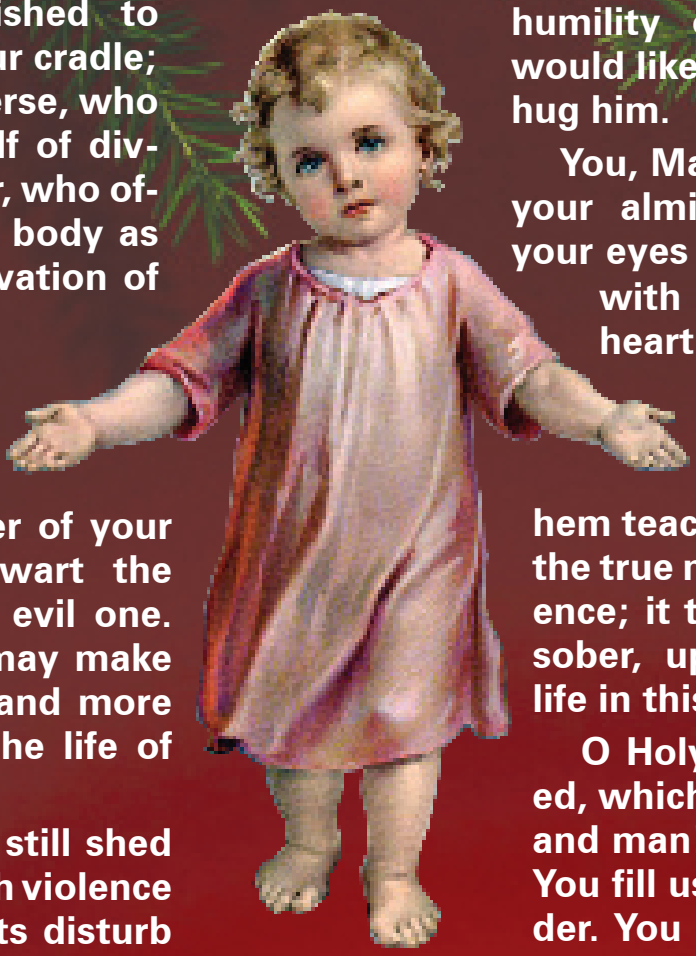
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O Child, who wished to have a manger for your cradle; O Creator of the universe, who have stripped yourself of divine glory; O Redeemer, who offered your vulnerable body as a sacrifice for the salvation of humanity!

May the splendor of your birth illuminate the night of the world. May the power of your message of love thwart the superb snares of the evil one. The gift of your life may make us understand more and more clearly the value of the life of every human being.

Too much blood is still shed on the earth! Too much violence and too many conflicts disturb the peaceful coexistence of nations!

You come to bring us peace. You are our peace! You alone can make of us a "purified people" which belongs to you forever, a people "zealous for good" (Tit 2,14).

Because a Child was born to us, a child was given to us! What an unfathomable mystery is hidden in the humility of this Child! We would like to we would like to hug him.

You, Mary, who watch over your almighty Son, give us your eyes to contemplate him with faith; give us your heart to adore it with love.

In his simplicity, the Child of Bethlehem teaches us to rediscover the true meaning of our existence; it teaches us "to live a sober, upright and devoted life in this world" (Tit 2,12)

O Holy Night, long awaited, which forever united God and man! Rekindle our hope. You fill us with ecstatic wonder. You assure us of the triumph of love over hatred, of life over death.

For this we remain absorbed in prayer.

In the luminous silence of your Nativity, you, Emanuele, continue to speak to us. And we are ready to listen to you. Amen!

Prayer of John Paul II in honor of the Child Jesus, recited at Christmas Mass in Rome in 2003.