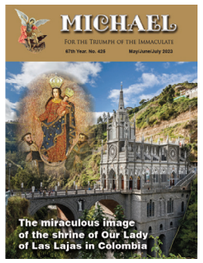


MICHAEL

FOR THE TRIUMPH OF THE IMMACULATE

67th Year. No. 425 May/June/July 2023

The miraculous image of the shrine of Our Lady of Las Lajas in Colombia



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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

Beware of Satan's traps

In addition to concerns about the armed conflicts in the world which could lead at any time to a world war and the use of nuclear weapons, the economic situation is also worrisome. The risk of the financial system collapsing is very real, bringing with it the fall of the American dollar and the economies of the West. This could result in a repeat of the 1929 crisis caused by the crash of the NY Stock Exchange, which led to widespread unemployment and poverty in all Western countries for a decade. It was an artificial crisis: products were still available to meet the populations' needs; it was only money that was scarce.

Why should we suffer another economic crisis? Gold, which can't be eaten, is not the basis of wealth. Products which meet human needs are the real wealth. As MICHAEL teaches, money is only a symbol which gives access to goods and services. Even following the crash of October 1929, trees continued to produce fruit and cows continued to make milk, so why should people starve in the face of an abundance of products? Would it be for a lack of symbols, a lack of money? There is an alternative: a financial system where money is an accurate reflection of reality and put at the service of the population. This is what MICHAEL proposes with the solution known as Economic Democracy, developed by Scottish engineer, Clifford Hugh Douglas (*see pages 8-12*).



The Temptation of Christ, by Ary Scheffer, 1854

This is the battle of our Movement (*see page 4*). We want the salvation of souls and so advocate for economic reform because the current system puts the salvation of souls at stake. As we say on page 5: "Money, which should be an instrument of service, has become an instrument of control and domination. The devil uses the present money system to enslave the whole world, so that people idolise money instead of worshipping the good Lord."

The Bank for International Settlements in Switzerland, which gives directives to the central banks of all countries in the world, wants to abolish cash (paper money and metal coins) and replace cash with a digital currency (CBDC, or Central Bank Digital Currency). With CBDC's, the government would know everything you purchase and would be able to block your bank account if you were not a good citizen according to their determination. Let's not fall into the financiers' trap. We must refuse their false remedy, which is only a means to more centralized control. Instead, let us spread the good news of Economic Democracy which, once applied, will genuinely free people from all financial worries.

If the present money system is the main means used by Satan for the damnation of souls, he also uses other tricks and sets many traps to bring us to hell. "What, some may ask, does hell exist?" Yes, teaches Our Lord, His Church and its saints (*see pages 13 to 15*). It is true that God is infinitely merciful and ready to forgive every sinner, but He cannot do so if man refuses this forgiveness, because God respects free will (*see page 16*).

To obtain God's forgiveness, it is important to acknowledge that we are sinners who can do nothing without God. We are called to live life in union with God, through humility and prayer, especially the prayer of the Rosary, in which we meditate on the mysteries of Jesus' life. It is a prayer that is very powerful and dear to Our Lady and all the recent Popes (*see page 20*).

Speaking of the Rosary, there is a wonderful shrine to Our Lady of the Rosary of Las Lajas in Colombia, South America (*see page 23*) which deserves more recognition. Following an apparition, the image of Mary and Jesus was miraculously fixed on a rock without any trace of paint or pigment, much like the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.

We must also meditate on the Word of God and put His Word into practice. Thanks to St. Jerome, among others, who translated the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew, we are now able to more easily understand His Word (*see page 27*).

The devil is a liar. His trick is to make us believe that he doesn't exist, that hell doesn't exist, and to make what is evil seem good. So let us not fall into the devil's traps—including the trap of his diabolical financial system that wants to control everything and everyone. Let us insist upon Economic Democracy, a financial system that respects the human person, created in God's mage and likeness, and who is destined to live forever with Him. Enjoy your reading ! ❖

Alain Pilote
Editor



The battle of MICHAEL

To promote a better world and a more Christian society

The most urgent reform is to correct the financial system

***by* Alain Pilote**

The very first issue of "Vers Demain" (in English, "Towards Tomorrow") was published in Canada in September, 1939. The journal, the French-language edition of MICHAEL, was founded by Louis Even and Gilberte Cote, founders of the Pilgrims of St. Michael. The English-language periodical, now called MICHAEL, was first published in 1953. So the reader can appreciate that the "White Berets" have been bringing their message to the world for almost 85 years, travelling all over Canada and the world teaching the economic reform principles known as Economic Democracy.





Louis Even and Gilberte Côté-Mercier

Clifford Hugh Douglas, who devised the financial proposals of Economic Democracy, was a genius, but it can be said that God used Louis Even and the Pilgrims of St. Michael to bring Economic Democracy to a wider audience in the light of Church teaching on social justice. If there had been only Douglas' writings, the man's ideas would have largely remained on a shelf, and few people would hear them today.

Mr. Even was a religious, a Brother of Christian Instruction born in France. He was an educator with a great devotion to the Blessed Mother. The good Lord used all this in Louis Even to found a great enduring movement of pilgrims spreading the teachings of Economic Democracy in light of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Mr. Even was a genius who immediately understood the implications of Douglas Social Credit, but he could have chosen to say, "That's all very well, but I'll leave it to others to make it known." No, Mr. Even also had an apostle's heart and a great love for the poor. It was all this that made him conclude: "Social Credit is a light on my path everyone must know." His dedication was so great that, even with the responsibilities of a wife and children, he left a good job in the midst of the Depression to give himself totally to the cause, trusting in Divine Providence which did not fail.

A better world

Louis Even and Gilberte Côté had given the new periodical launched in 1939 the name "Vers Demain" (Towards Tomorrow), because its aim and purpose was to secure a better future, a better world.

Vers Demain and MICHAEL continue to this day to promote Economic Democracy out of our Rougemont, Canada headquarters. You might ask, "Is monetary reform enough to achieve a better world?" Afterall, we need a world that is morally better; one that recognizes and submits to God's will. Indeed, the founders did not call their periodicals "The Social Credit Journal", because for a better world we must address not only monetary reform, but also keep with the teachings of the Church.

« "Social Credit is a light on my path" — Louis Even

Moreover, Mr. Even understood from the beginning that by wanting to correct the current financial system, he was attacking not only the bankers, but a satanic power. Money is indeed one of the main instruments used by Satan to corrupt souls. St. Paul wrote: "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). And Our Lord said: "You cannot serve two masters, you cannot serve both God and money" (Luke 16:13).

Money, which should be an instrument of service, is rather an instrument of control and domination. The devil uses the current money system to enslave the whole world, so that people idolise money instead of worshipping the good Lord.

Louis Even was himself a great Catholic, and he was convinced that a better world could only be built on the eternal principles of the Gospel of Christ and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, headed by its visible head on earth, the Supreme Pontiff.

The objectives of MICHAEL are clearly stated on page 2 of each issue of the publication, just above the Table of Contents. It reads: **"A journal of Catholics patriots for the Kingship of Christ and Mary in souls, in families and in nations."** And also: **"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."** This means, among other things, that the Social Credit philosophy that is referred to in MICHAEL has nothing to do with political parties, not even so-called Social Credit parties, but is an economic reform that could be applied and endorsed by any party in power. (You may have noticed that we increasingly use the term "Economic Democracy" to refer to the financial proposals of Scottish engineer Clifford Hugh Douglas to avoid confusion with the political party system and to avoid confusion with the Communist Chinese Party's surveillance and control system that is known as Social Credit.)

MICHAEL is therefore a periodical of Catholic patriots that endorses a model of economic reform. Some might ask: "What does this have to do with religion?"

If the Church intervenes in social issues and has developed a set of principles known as the "Social Doctrine of the Church", it is essentially because, as Pope Benedict XV said in 1920, **"It is in the economic field that the salvation of souls is in danger"**. His immediate successor, Pope Pius XI, also wrote:



"It may be said with all truth that nowadays the conditions of social and economic life are such that vast multitudes of men can only with great difficulty pay attention to that one thing necessary, namely their eternal salvation." (Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931.) Throughout the centuries, all the Popes have spoken in a similar fashion.

Money is the license to live

The fact that countless souls are lost because of the current financial system is easy to see. We need a minimum of material goods to survive our short pilgrimage on earth. God created man with an immortal soul but He also created us with material needs for food, clothing and shelter. But in order to get food, clothing and shelter, one must have money to purchase them; otherwise, goods will rot on store shelves and the pauper will starve to death.

In other words, money is the license to live for the individual. Having no money means certain death. Those who hold the power to create money — the bankers and the system they have developed — therefore literally control our lives. Pope Pius XI correctly described this in his Encyclical letter, *Quadragesimo Anno*, in 1931:



Pius XI

"This power becomes particularly irresistible when exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, are able also to govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason supplying, so to speak, the lifeblood to the entire economic body and grasping, as it were, in their hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against their will." The Pope added that **"the State has become a slave, bound over to the service of** ▶

human passion and greed."

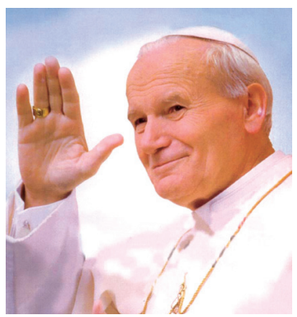
This control of money by private interests is the greatest swindle of all times and it has brought about an incalculable number of disastrous consequences: economic depressions, wars, etc. One could not calculate the harms the crooked financial system and the chronic money shortage has done to souls. Here are only a few examples, which could be multiplied ad nauseam.

On the world scale, over one billion seven hundred million people have to search through heaps of garbage to find something to eat and stay alive. Over 100 million children on the globe are homeless and live in the streets, abandoned by their parents who can no longer support them. Every day on earth, over 40,000 children die of hunger or disease, all because of a lack of money.

Moreover, every country in the world — industrialized and developing countries alike — struggles with debts that cannot be repaid and many of these countries cannot pay even the interest on their debts. Individuals too are trapped in a debt spiral: the level of debt of Canadian households in relation to their disposable income reached a record high of 186% in 2022, which means that for every $100 of net income, Canadian families owe $186 !

To correct the financial system

The Church cannot remain indifferent to situations like hunger in the world and indebtedness, both which jeopardize the salvation of souls. This is why she calls for a reform of the financial and economic systems, to put them at the service of the human person. For example, Pope John Paul II's calls along these lines were countless. In his first Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis (*The Redeemer of Man, March 4, 1979), the Holy Father spoke of **"the indispensable transformations of the structures of economic life of poverty amidst plenty that brings into question the financial and monetary mechanisms. Man cannot become the slave of economic systems."** Also:



Saint John Paul II

"Again, I want to tackle a very delicate and painful issue. I mean the torment of the representatives of several countries, who no longer know how to face the fearful problem of indebtedness. A structural reform of the world financial system is, without doubt, one of the initiatives that seem the most urgent and necessary" (Message of the Holy Father to the 6th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva, September 26, 1985).

The Church therefore presents the moral principles on which any financial or economic system must be judged. And so that these principles may be applied in a practical way, the Church calls on the lay faithful — whose proper role, according to the Second Vatican Council, is to renew the temporal order and bring it in accord with God's plan — to work for the search of concrete solutions and the establishment of an economic system that conforms to the teachings of the Gospel and to the principles of the Church's Social Doctrine.

Economic Democracy

It is for these reasons that Louis Even decided to spread the doctrine of Economic Democracy — the set of principles and financial proposals that were set forth for the first time in 1918 by Scottish engineer, Clifford Hugh Douglas, to solve the problem of the chronic shortage of purchasing power in the hands of the consumers. Think of the term "social credit" to mean social money or national money, money issued by society, as opposed to the present money that is a "banking credit", money issued by the banks.

When Louis Even discovered "the great light of Social Credit" in 1934, he immediately understood how this solution would put into application Christian principles of social justice in economics — especially regarding the right of all to the use of material goods and the distribution of daily bread to all — through the allocation of a social Dividend to every human being. This is why, as soon as he came across this knowledge, Louis Even accepted that it was his duty to make it known to all.

The duty of every Christian

It is a duty and an obligation for every Christian to work for the establishment of a better economic system, and John Paul II indicated that "no one is dispensed from collaborating in this task." This is so even when the task is difficult, wrote the Holy Father. (It cannot be any other way, since when one attacks the monopoly enjoyed by the controllers of money and credit, one attacks the greatest power in this world.)

In spite of the lack of understanding, grievances and opposition of all kinds, there should be no room for discouragement, since the task remains "urgent and necessary."

"Anyone wishing to renounce the difficult yet noble task of improving the lot of man in his totality, and of all people, with the excuse that the struggle is difficult and that constant effort is required, or simply because of the experience of defeat and the need to begin again, that person would be betraying the will of God the Creator" (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, n. 30).

The love of neighbour

The most fundamental reason every Christian must work for the establishment of a better economic system is that we will be judged on what we have done for our brothers and sisters in need. Jesus identified Himself with those who suffer, as it is written in the Gospel: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40). Our faith teaches us to see Christ in each of our brothers and to love our neighbour as we love Christ.

There are, of course, many ways to help our brothers in need: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, visiting the imprisoned and the sick, etc. Some will send donations to charitable organizations, whether to help the poor of our country or elsewhere. These donations may relieve some poor people for a few days or weeks, but they do not fix the causes of poverty.

What is required is to correct the problem at its root, to attack the very cause of poverty, and to re-establish every human being in his rights and dignity as a person created in the image of God and a being entitled to a minimum of earthly goods. And to give to each what is his due is precisely what justice consists of.

"More than any other, the individual who is animated by true charity labors skillfully to discover the causes of misery, to find the means to combat it and to overcome it resolutely. A creator of peace, he will follow his path, lighting the lamps of joy and playing their brilliance and loveliness on the hearts of men across the surface of the globe, leading them to recognize, across all frontiers, the faces of their brothers, the faces of their friends" (Paul VI, Encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio* on the development of peoples, n. 75).

Louis Even had discovered the cause of the misery of the people — the creation and control of money by private banks — and also the means to combat this swindle: the education of the people who would then clamor for justice.

In order to make sure that the authentic message would reach the population and, most of all, because his heart was full of great charity towards his neighbour, Louis Even left a secure job in the middle of the Great Depression, to found the "Vers Demain" Journal in 1939, and give all of himself and his time to the cause of justice. He became, literally, a pilgrim on the roads of Canada, sharing the great message with all his brothers and sisters. His examples of dedication and self-giving attracted other apostles to follow him.

The Popes have said that the transformation of the economic structures will be obtained only through self-dedication and sacrifices made for the love of one's neighbour, and this is exactly the method made popular by Louis Even and the Pilgrims of Saint Michael:



The entrance of the Louis Even Institute in Rougemont

"These attitudes and 'structures of sin' are only conquered — presupposing the help of divine grace — by a diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbour" (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 38).

No justice without God

John Paul II spoke of the need for divine grace in this battle for justice, and this is what Louis Even understood from the very beginning: that justice is impossible without God. Moreover, Economic Democracy is more than a monetary reform system. Rather, it is a system based on God's intended order for society.

Douglas once said that "social credit" is the confidence that we can live in society, that society can provide us with goods and services. It is the trust that one will not be shot in the street or robbed by one's neighbour, etc. If God's Commandments are not obeyed, no order and no life in society is possible.

Divine assistance is especially needed when one comes to know that the real goal of the financiers is the establishment of a one-world government — which includes the destruction of the family and Christianity — and that the promoters of the New World Order are actually led by Satan himself, whose sole aim is the ruin of souls.

To sum up, our battle is a battle for the salvation of souls. This periodical only repeats what the Popes and the Church demand: a new evangelization to remind Christians of basic Church principles, sometimes forgotten, and a restructuring of the economic system. To be a Pilgrim of St. Michael is the most urgent and necessary vocation of our times. All our readers are invited to find new subscribers to help us spread the message. How great and important is the work begun by Louis Even ! ❖

Alain Pilote



“A silly, inexplicable, inhuman dictatorship”

***by* Louis Even**

A dictatorship over public institutions

There are hundreds of pot holes in the streets of Montreal, and in the same city thousands of unemployed people are looking for work. But both the pot holes remain and the unemployed, who could repair the streets, remain.

In the province of Quebec there are hospitals to be built, roads to be constructed and repaired, and at the same time, many unemployed people looking for work.

What is preventing the city of Montreal or any jurisdiction from using the labour force that is waiting to do the work that needs to be done? Administrators tell us it’s the lack of money.

Why doesn’t society finance what it can produce? Why is what is physically possible and demanded by all made impossible due to a limited supply of printed pieces of paper or numbers in a bank account?

Why does the money system hinder the exercise of the production system? What makes the money system the arbiter?

The money system does not come from God or from nature. It was established, is accepted and maintained by men. Can one believe that intelligent people established a money system in order to introduce obstacles and to make the execution of wanted projects impossible?

The purpose of the money system cannot have been to prevent men’s hands from taking stone, wood, steel, and building what is needed. Nor can its purpose be to prevent men from filling pot holes in city streets!

Is this not the silliest, most inexplicable dictatorship, as well as the most inhumane and cruel to those who suffer both in the flesh and in the mind?

Dictatorship over our lives

This tyranny does not only affect public services. It is even more visible in the lives of individuals and families.

Ask a father or mother of the family what is their most constant concern for today and tomorrow. What does the mother worry about every time she has to buy supplies for the family? Does she fear that tomorrow she will not be able to find bread, meat, butter, milk, shoes, clothes, medicines, to meet the families needs? Of course not. What she fears is that she will have no money to pay for these necessities.

Why can’t citizens be reassured about tomorrow? Why should they be afraid of running out of the essentials of life, when Canada is able to provide more than enough for all?

On the contrary, would it not be logical for a family’s standard of living to be in line with the production capacity of the country? This productive capacity is far from being fully utilized.

Is this not absurdity as well as barbarism? What is it that prevents all possible and desired production from being made and from entering the homes where it is needed?

Always the same obstacle: a lack of money. Once again, the money obstacle is neither divine nor natural, but man-made. It is a purely artificial obstacle.

Unless it was the work of a sadistic tyrant, the money system was not designed to prevent products from passing from the merchant who wants to sell to the mother who wants to buy.

A system of roads was not built to prevent movement, but to promote movement. Similarly, the purpose of a sound money system is to promote the distribution and flow of goods to needs, not to impede them.

Social instrument turned anti-social

But while it may have been good in the past, our money system is no longer healthy. It is flawed, very flawed. It has lost its vocation. It has become a hardship; a punishment instead of a service.

Those who make or remove money exercise control over the production and the productive capacity of a country. They issue, or withdraw, according to their judgment, the tool that makes it possible to purchase goods that would address needs.

By controlling money and credit in this way, they hold our lives in the palms of their hands.

Since the dollar entitles anyone to the products of anyone else, the making or removal of money is a function of a social nature. This function should therefore be carried out by society, not by a profit-making institution. We would not accept that justice be dispensed by a private company for its own profit. Why do we accept that the control of money, a function of a social nature, is in the hands of private institutions existing and operating for their own interests?

It is not you, nor I, nor your mayor, not even your government, that decides that there will be so much money, and no more, in circulation. Governments tell us that they have no money other than what they get from those who have. Your employer tells you the same thing.



A system of perpetual indebtedness

But where does money start? Who brings it into the world? Who puts so much of it, and no more, into circulation? Who can make it scarce by taking it out of circulation?

[Douglas] Social Crediters have shed light on this so-called mystery. All money in circulation starts when a bank lends to a borrower. The borrower may be an industrialist, a person, or a government.

And every time the bank lends credit in this way, it obliges the borrower to return it on such and such a date, with interest. So, the money starts as a debt to be repaid; and the repayment is always more than the loan.

The borrower will therefore be obliged to “pump back” from circulation, through prices if he is a private individual, through taxes if he is a public institution, more money than his loan has put into circulation. Prices will therefore have to be increased beyond the value of the product; and the taxes will have to be increased beyond the value of the public service. One may well find life expensive and taxes heavy.

In order to be able to extract more money from circulation than the loan had advanced, more money has to be put into circulation somewhere, and it is always put into circulation in the same way: by a debt to be repaid with interest. It is a system of perpetual indebtedness, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another. It is impossible, globally, to pay back more money than there is in circulation. If someone pays their debts to the banking system, it is at the expense of someone else. The debts may change shoulders, nominally; but the sum of the debts can only increase, and it is always the public that pays for it, either in prices or in taxes.

There is a great vice in the money system. Control belongs to profit-making companies called banks who literally make money which is loaned into existence. Perpetual indebtedness is unavoidable.

Progress turned into punishment

Another defect of the money system is that it does not distribute all production and it distributes it poorly. This defect can only grow with advances in production methods and techniques.

One of the features of the current system is that in order to obtain purchasing power one must work. However, progress replaces men with machines. There is a resulting contradiction in which progress produces more goods with fewer workers, yet jobs are necessary to procure those same goods!

One tries to remedy the situation by creating new jobs which leads to materialism. The second so-called remedy is production for war. This flows well since it is distributed on the heads of others.

The system leads either to materialism or war, rather than liberating society to pursue leisure activities freely without the risk of starvation.

Servant Money: Economic Democracy

Economic Democracy offers a financial system that is both social (in line with productive possibilities and responsive to human needs) and which does not indebt the community and efficiently distributes production, leaving no one behind.

Economic Democracy, in fact, would make money the exact, mathematical, accounting expression of what is produced and what is destroyed, and then, through a National Dividend to all, would guarantee a share of products to all.

Economic Democracy would not abolish the wages for work that production still needs but it would introduce a National Dividend to all. As progress reduces the need for human labour, more money would be distributed as a National Dividend in relation to the total amount distributed via employment.

Progress and Economic Democracy go hand in hand. Progress and peacemaking go well together. Leisure and [Douglas] Social Credit go well together. Humanism and Economic Democracy go well together. Family and Economic Democracy go well together.

When a person has nothing, he can be made to grovel for food. By guaranteeing the necessities for all, Economic Democracy would put an end to modern slavery. When one is assured of at least the necessities of life, one can then refuse to be enslaved. ❖

Louis Even

The importance of the money issue

***by* Louis Even**

The following article was first published in the Cahiers du Crédit Social in August 1939, just before the first issue of Vers Demain (the French-language version of MICHAEL) was published.

At the bottom of all problems

Why does MICHAEL focus on the issue of money? Because all economic problems, and almost all political problems, are primarily about money.

We never claim that the monetary question is the only one to be settled nor the only one that should preoccupy us. But it is the most pressing, because everything else is a money problem. The disorder in the monetary system is such that it spoils everything else.

Money is important in our world today, not because money is wealth, but because wealth is not distributed without money. Useful goods are the real wealth that mocks us when we don't have money (even when granaries are full).

We survive when the household has money. Money is scarce, and because money is scarce, wealth will be suppressed. This is a mess, of course, but one that pleases those who control money.

Money is made by men

If the amount of money on earth depended on the weather or some other factor beyond human control, we would have to accept the consequences. Perhaps this is the mindset that has maintained the permanence of false beliefs about money.

Money is not made by God, nor by angels, nor by natural phenomena, but by men.

And not by socially inspired men. The mere fact that money is born in the billions for war in every country in the world and disappears without justification when production is in full swing, proves there are motives at play which are neither social nor human.

Some ignorant people will repeat that the quantity of money does not depend on men, because money must be limited according to the gold supply.

This fable no longer holds true today. Men were certainly not being directed to the gold mines during the two great wars, when money was being created to finance the slaughter. On the other hand, during the decade of the Depression, gold was piling up in Fort Knox, even when the United States had 13 million unemployed because of a lack of money. Similarly, never has Canada produced so much gold as during the crisis, and never has it been so short of money.

Money is lacking when those who make and destroy it destroy more than they make. Money abounds, when these same men issue more money than they recall.

What is money

Money is any instrument accepted in exchange for goods. The nature of the instrument does not matter, as long as it is universally accepted in the country.

For instance, if I buy a chair which costs $100, I can pay for it with ten $10 notes or a $100 note, or I can include coins in my payment. The metal coin and the paper rectangle are both money. It is not the material that makes bills and coins valuable. There is exactly the same paper in a $10 note as in a $100 note.

If I have an account at the bank, I can also pay for the chair with a cheque. The cheque moves the money from my account to the merchant's account.

So, everything in bank accounts is also money. But are bank accounts made of metal or p a p e r money savings? Far from it.

There are at least ten times as many chequing accounts on the books of banks in Canada as the total amount of metal or paper money in the country.

Origin of bank accounts

Bank accounts are not built on savings alone. Most bank accounts are built by the banker himself, not by the saver.

I am a saver. I have saved $100 and take it to the bank for deposit. The banker puts it in his drawer, takes his book, looks up my account and adds $100 to my credit. My account has grown by $100 by moving money around that I took to the bank.

But here is a borrower. He comes to the bank for a loan of $20,000. He doesn't bring money to the bank; he comes to get it. What does the banker do? Does he give the borrower $20,000 in paper or metal? Not usually. The banker takes his book and adds $20,000 to the borrower's credit. The borrower's account grew by $20,000.

Who has increased the borrower's account by $20,000? Surely not the borrower himself, since he came to collect money instead of borrowing it. Who did? The banker himself.

Where does the banker get the $20,000? He doesn't take anything out of his drawer; he doesn't diminish anyone's account; he doesn't take anything out of his pocket; yet he still adds $20,000 to an account. There is $20,000 more in the total accounts of the country than there was before the transaction. The chequing base is increased by $20,000. Where did this money come from? From the banker's pen.

Bank accounts grow in two ways: the small way, by the saver's contribution—simply moving money around. The big way is by borrowing—introducing new money that did not exist before. This is money creation; no doubt about it. With this credit I can purchase or pay for anything, just as I can with metal or paper money.

The saver works and deprives himself to increase his account; he is rewarded with 1% of his savings as long as it remains in the hands of the banker.



The banker holds a pen and with one stroke makes you $20,000. He rewards himself by charging you 5% of the total amount.

Public borrowing

Public borrowing is done in the same way. Let's take the Minister of Finance to the bank to borrow $1 billion. The Minister gives the banker a 'bond', a 'debenture', a promise to repay: I promise to repay the bank the sum of $1 billion in 20 years, plus interest at 5% for 20 years.

What does the banker do? Does he pull out $1 billion in paper? Not at all.

The banker does what he did earlier. He opens his book to the account of the Minister of Finance and puts $1 billion to the credit of the government. The Minister of Finance can then sign cheques for $1 billion to pay or buy anything.

Where did the banker get this $1 billion? Not in his drawer, not in his pocket, and not from the account of another.

To lend money without taking any from anywhere, you have to make money, and that's exactly what the banker does.

But is this a good thing, or is it a bad thing?

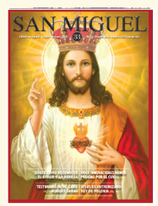
Making money with a pen is a wonderful modern invention. Since the modern production of useful goods is very easy, it is fortunate that the production of modern money is easy. This would make it possible, through bookkeeping, to have as much money as is needed to dispose of all that is produced.

Yet the money does not follow at all according to production. It can be limited even with abundant production, or it can be abundant when store shelves are empty of products. Why is this? Because of the will of the person who holds the pen and because of the terms he sets to create money. ▶









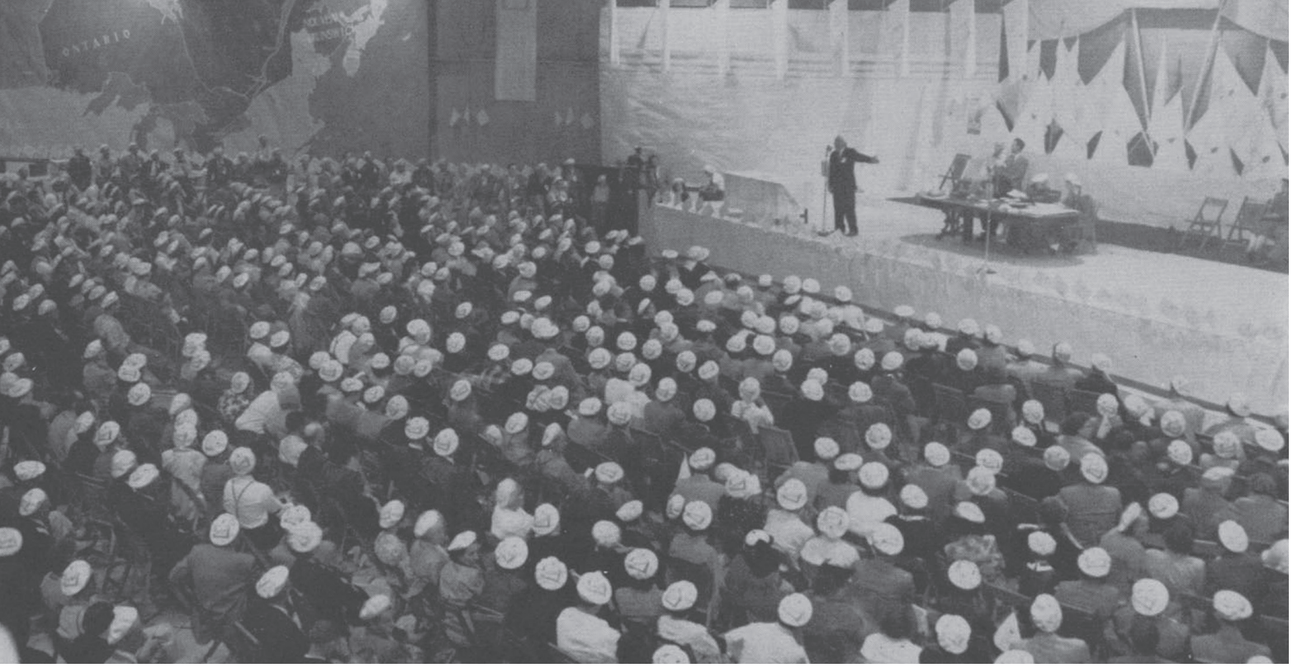
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Louis Even addressing the crowd at our Quebec City Congress in 1955

Money is necessarily condemned to scarcity since it is born on the condition that it dies in greater quantities than it is born. If there is any money left, it is simply due to the increase of debts elsewhere.

When public debt increases, total interest increases. When annual interest increases, taxes increase. When taxes rise, money falls, even if prices rise. When money decreases, we deprive ourselves. When we deprive ourselves, unemployment sets in. We know the rest.

All this seems very simple and easy to understand, when you strip it of all the pretence that complicates and camouflages what is going on.

But when the public is kept in the dark, it attributes the problem to the government of the day, and rather than targeting the common enemy, we go into political battles against each other.

Disorder

This birth of money as the master of men is a disorder. Money was instituted to serve but it is born by enslaving. Money comes into the world by creating mathematically unpayable debts. And the theft of society's credit is the basis of the operation that puts society into debt.

How can money that starts out this way be expected to perform a beneficial role? It is born for the benefit of some exploiters, and continues to benefit these exploiters. It is born by placing governments at its feet, and continues to be the master of governments.

Meanwhile, a child is born a slave to debt. By coming into the world, he assumes his share of the public debt of his country. He is born in debt and will remain so for the rest of his life. The system is responsible for increasing the debt. The master is money; the slave is the human being. Disorder!

Large families may well suffer more from such a system because to multiply children is to multiply slaves.

Disorder is the result of scarce money in a world of abundant production. Disorder! Money that disappears when production is maintained. Disorder! Money regulated by the profit motive of the banker, instead of the social necessity motive. Disorder! Money that is born the property of a few individuals, when this is the monetisation of a public property.

As long as this disorder is not corrected, there is little point in trying to establish some order in social relations. It is because they understand this great disorder that the Social Crediters of MICHAEL insist on remedying it.

The application of the monetary proposals of Social Credit or Economic Democracy, developed by Clifford Hugh Douglas, would restore money to its role as a servant, an instrument for distributing to men the abundance made for them, whether it comes directly from Providence, or is the product of labour and applied science. Men, all men, each and every one, must have their share. ❖

Louis Even

Why remain loyal to the Work of MICHAEL
Spiritually and economically complete

***by* Melvin Sickler**

Several times I have been asked why I remain a loyal member of the MICHAEL Movement (the Pilgrims of Saint Michael). What is it about the Pilgrims of Saint Michael that is so special?

This is a good question. To begin with, I find that the Pilgrims of Saint Michael is the only movement that I know of that is complete; a movement that works with the economic issues as well as the spiritual issues.

The Popes of the Catholic Church have written several encyclicals and have given countless speeches where they have stated, in a nutshell, that the laity have the grace of state and the responsibility to work for ways to fight poverty and, in particular, to work for a worldwide monetary reform that respects the rights and dignity of every human person.



Melvin Sickler

It was Pope Benedict XV who once stated: "It is in the economic field that the salvation of souls is at stake." One can honestly also say that the nucleus of all evil stems from those who control the monies of the world. Just think for a moment. Often, if not every day, you do transactions using some form of money, be it cash, check, or credit card. Without this medium of exchange, you could not buy your basic necessities to live; some form of money is needed to function properly in any society. So if the money of a given area becomes controlled, all the people who live in that area also become controlled.

If money is scarce, and there are no social programs to help, people are more apt to turn to dishonest or even criminal means to find a way to survive. Thus sin becomes a way of life for many!

But with monetary reform, such as the Pilgrims of Saint Michael propose, people could live in financial security without having to work two or three jobs to survive, always being assured that they would have the necessary money to buy their necessities to live, and they would also have more free time to attend to their eternal salvation.

A duty to fight poverty

Some may say that they are all set as far as their financial situation is concerned; that they have a financial security where there are no worries about paying bills, and that they live quite comfortably. But what about the rest of the world? What about all the people who live in dire poverty, who struggle every day just to keep alive? Do we just ignore them?

As of 2022, the number of people suffering from chronic hunger worldwide has climbed to 811 million. Approximately 50 million people are facing emergency levels of hunger across 45 countries. The situation has gotten so serious in the last couple of years that many countries are now at the risk of famine.

An annual study by the United Nations has found that more and more people every year are going hungry. Tens of millions have joined the ranks of the chronically under-nourished over the past five years, and countries around the world continue to struggle with multiple forms of malnutrition.

To correct the problem

We could send donations to charitable organizations to help the people in these Third World countries, and the Church even encourages that we do so. But if these donations can relieve a few poor people for a few days or weeks, they nevertheless do not suppress the causes of poverty.

We, the Pilgrims of Saint Michael, believe that the Social Credit philosophy that we promote, if applied into the laws of every country, would put an end to world poverty, an end to wars, and an end to the threat of a one-world government. How could anyone who has a true love for their neighbor turn their back on such a beautiful program as that of the Pilgrims of Saint Michael?

For myself, I will remain a loyal member of the Pilgrims of Saint Michael until death in anyway that I can assist, always making it a point to wear my white beret as a witness of my loyalty to so great a Work. For I know that when I die, I too, like everyone else, will be judged on how I worked to assist my neighbor who was in need. No, I refuse to sin by omission! ❖

Melvin Sickler

Grégoire Beauchamp, of Sarnia, Ontario, died on February 1, 2023, at the age of 60. He had been a full-time Pilgrim for MICHAEL from 1981 to 1987. The last years of his life were difficult as he suffered from multiple sclerosis. His mother, Mireille Beauchamp, also a great apostle of MICHAEL, died in March 2022, at the age of 91.

Yes, hell exists
God has shown it to many saints

In the previous issue of MICHAEL, we quoted the Catechism of the Catholic Church on hell. Sadly, today, not every Catholic and Christian believes that hell exists and that the souls of the damned will suffer in hell for eternity. People say: "Oh, hell was invented by priests to scare people", or "Hell exists, but there is no one in it", or "Good people will go to heaven, but bad people will not go to hell, they will simply be annihilated". Well, no, hell really exists, it is a truth of faith, and there are souls in hell.

As the Catechism explains, after physical death, the soul immediately passes into judgment before God. Following this judgement, one will go either to heaven or to hell for all eternity. One can also go to purgatory for purification and eventually be in heaven for eternity, but if one dies in a state of mortal sin, he goes immediately to hell.

Hell is a dreadful place where the human being is permanently tortured and where his suffering will never end. It is therefore very important to know how to avoid eternal damnation after death. It is indeed the most important thing to know.

Jesus' words about hell

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us 15 times that hell exists. Three striking passages follow.

- **The parable of the darnel** (Matthew 13:36-43): "The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world; the good seed is the subjects of the kingdom; the darnel, the subjects of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them, the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels. Well then, just as the darnel is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time. The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that provoke offences and all who do evil, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

- **On the Last Judgement** (Matthew 25:31-46): "Next he will say to those on his left hand, 'Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels… I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you



The words always and forever have a terrible meaning in hell: always stay in this place, yiou are here forever!

neglected to do it to me'. And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life."

- **The parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus** (Luke 16:19-31): "Now the poor man (Lazarus) died and was carried away by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In his torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his bosom. So he cried out, 'Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames'. 'My son,' Abraham replied 'remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone, if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours, and to stop any crossing from your side to ours.'

"The rich man replied, 'Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too'. 'They have Moses and the prophets,' said Abraham 'let them listen to them.'. 'Ah no, father Abraham,' said the rich man 'but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

"Then Abraham said to him, 'If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead'."

Jesus has spoken, the Catechism has spoken, but still many are not convinced of the existence of hell. Well! God, in his great goodness, has allowed many saints to visit hell in spirit, and sometimes in body, to bear witness to it, such as St. Teresa of Avila, St. Frances Romana, St. Faustina Kowalska and St. John Bosco. Damned souls have appeared to humans, and the Virgin Mary, in apparitions recognised by the Church, has shown children what hell is like. Will this be enough to convince the sceptics? Only God knows, but here are some testimonies.

St. Theresa of Avila's vision of hell

A Carmelite nun, St. Theresa of Avila (1515-1582) visited hell through God's grace. In the following, she recounted her terrifying vision:

"A long time after the Lord had already granted me many of the favours I've mentioned and other very lofty ones, while I was in prayer one day, I suddenly found that, without knowing how, I had seemingly been put in hell. I understood that the Lord wanted me to see the place the devils had prepared for me and which I merited because of my sins. This experience took place within the shortest space of time, but even were I to live for many years, I think it would be impossible for me to forget it.

"What I felt, it seems to me, cannot even begin to be exaggerated; nor can it be understood. I experienced a fire in the soul that I don't know how I



St. Theresa of Avila

could describe. The bodily pains were so unbearable that though I had suffered excruciating ones in this life and, according to what doctors say, the worst that can be suffered on earth, for all my nerves were shrunken when I was paralyzed, plus many other sufferings of many kinds that I endured and even some, as I said, caused by the devil; these were all nothing in comparison with the ones I experienced there. I saw furthermore that they would go on without end and without ever ceasing.

"This, however, was nothing next to the soul's agonizing: a constriction, a suffocation, an affliction so keenly felt and with such a despairing and tormenting unhappiness that I don't know how to word it strongly enough. To say the experience is as though the soul were continually being wrested from the body would be insufficient, for it would make you think somebody else is taking away the life, whereas here it is the soul itself that tears itself in pieces. The fact is that I don't know how to give a sufficiently powerful description of that interior fire and of that despair, coming in addition to such extreme torments and pains. I didn't see who inflicted them on me, but, as it seemed to me, I felt myself burning and crumbling; and I repeat the worst was that interior fire and despair."

St. Frances of Rome on the topic of hell

St. Frances of Rome (1384-1440), by the will ▶



Saint Frances of Rome

▶ of God, visited hell. Following this visit, she wrote a book where she recounted what she saw. This treatise gives us much information about hell. Here are excerpts from Chapter II, titled "Tortures exercised on nine kinds of sinners".

1. Torture of those who have offended nature by their impurities. Frances saw in hell's lowest and most horrible section men and women who were submitted to horrible tortures. The demons who were their torturers would have them sit on steel bars, reddened by fire that penetrated their body lengthwise and exited through the top of the head. While one demon pulled the bar out and inserted it anew, other demons, using burning snips, cut through their flesh from head to toe. These torments were unceasing, not to mention other treatments such as fire, freezing cold, deep darkness, blasphemies and gnashing of teeth.

2. Torture of the usurers. Not far from where the first ones were being held, Frances saw another place where criminals were tortured in a different way, and she was told they were usurers. These wretched souls were lying down nailed on a table of fire, arms outstretched, not in the shape of a cross, and Frances' guide told her that any mention of the cross was banished from these infernal places. Each had a circular red iron on his head.

Demons drew melted gold and silver from containers that they poured in their mouth; they also poured some in a wound they had made to their heart while repeating: "Remember, you wretched souls, the affection you had for these metals during your lifetime; it is this affection that has brought you here." They would then submerge them in a basin filled with liquified gold and silver; this way, they would be submitted from one torment to the next, without reprieve. They also suffered all the other torments endured by all the other suffering souls; this led them to a horrible despair; which is why they blasphemed unceasingly the sacred name of the One who exercised upon them this just vengeance.

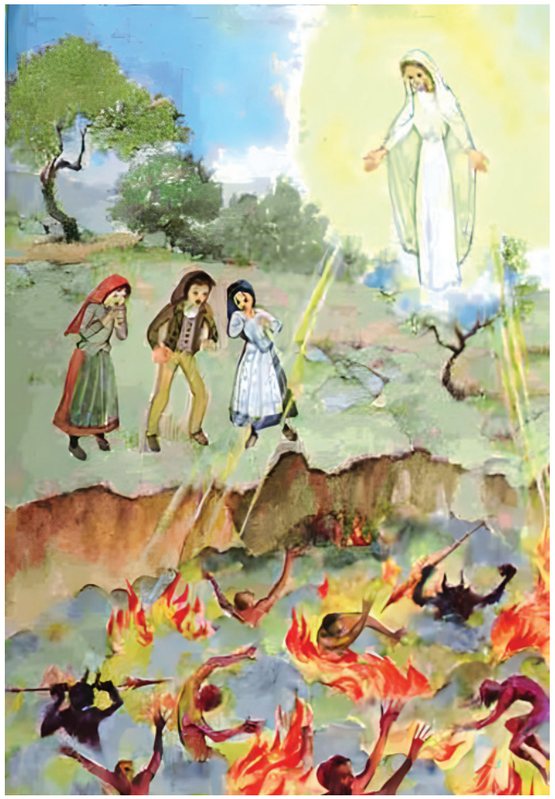
The other seven types of sinners included blasphemers, traitors, killers, apostates, those who committed incest, sorcerers, and those who had been excommunicated.

In a book titled *Does Hell Exist?,* Dom Joseph Tomaselli wrote: "Impurity is the sin that leads us easily to hell". St. Alphonsus Liguori stated: "We go to hell because of this sin, or at least we cannot avoid hell without having committed it".

Vision of hell at Fatima

The Fatima apparitions have been authenticated by the Catholic Church. On July 13, 1917, the Blessed Virgin showed a vision of hell to three young children, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco at Fatima. Here is Lucia's account:

"[Mary] opened her hands once more, as she had done the two previous months. The rays [of light] appeared to penetrate the earth, and we



saw, as it were, a vast sea of fire. Plunged in this fire, we saw the demons and the souls [of the damned].

"The latter were like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, having human forms. They were floating about in that conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames which issued from within themselves, together with great clouds of smoke. Now they fell back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fright. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me.)



Saint Faustine Kowalska

"The demons were distinguished [from the souls of the damned] by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. That vision only lasted for a moment, thanks to our good Heavenly Mother, who at the first apparition had promised to take us to Heaven. Without that, I think that we would have died of terror and fear."

Vision of hell by Sister Faustina

St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), a religious sister from Poland, saw Jesus on many occasions during her lifetime. Jesus asked her to paint the now famous image of our Lord, known as His Divine Mercy. One day, she was transported to hell. What follows is an account of the experience.

"Today I was led by an angel to the chasms of hell. It is a place of great torture; how awesomely large and extensive it is! The kinds of tortures I saw:

"The first torture that constitutes hell is the loss of God; the second is perpetual remorse of conscience; the third is that one's condition will never change; the fourth is the fire that will penetrate the soul without destroying it – a terrible suffering, since it is a purely spiritual fire, lit by God's anger; the fifth torture is continual darkness and a terrible suffocating smell, and, despite the darkness, the devils and the souls of the damned see each other and all the evil, both of others and their own; the sixth torture is the constant company of Satan; the seventh torture is horrible despair, hatred of God, vile words, curses and blasphemies.

"These are the tortures suffered by all the damned together, but that is not the end of their sufferings. There are special tortures destined for particular souls. These are the torments of the senses. Each soul undergoes terrible and indescribable sufferings, related to the manner in which it has sinned. There are caverns and pits of torture where one form of agony differs from another. I would have died at the very sight of these tortures if the omnipotence of God had not supported me. Let the sinner know that he will be tortured throughout all eternity in those senses which he made use of to sin. I am writing this at the command of God, so that no soul may find an excuse by saying there is no hell, or that nobody has ever been there, and so no one can say what it is like.

"I, Sister Faustina, by the order of God, have visited the abysses of hell so that I might tell souls about it and testify to its existence. I cannot speak about it now; but I have received a command from God to leave it in writing. The devils were full of hatred for me, but they had to obey me at the command of God. What I have written is but a pale shadow of the things I saw. But I noticed one thing: that most of the souls there are those who disbelieved that there is a hell.

"When I came to, I could hardly recover from the fright. How terribly souls suffer there! Consequently, I pray even more fervently for the conversion of sinners. I incessantly plead God's mercy upon them. O my Jesus, I would rather be in agony until the end of the world, amidst the greatest sufferings, than offend You by the least sin" (Diary of St. Faustina, 741).

Dear reader, are you in a state of grace? Do you have on your conscience a grave sin that could threaten your eternity should you die unexpectedly? If so, do not hesitate to feel true repentance. Go to Confession on this very day or as soon as you are able. We must obey the Commandments, frequent the sacraments, pray, do good works, wear the scapular of Mount Carmel, etc. As we shall see in the following article God wants each of us to be saved and spend eternity with Him in Heaven. ❖

The mercy of God is infinite

But it does not override human freedom

Some might say, after seeing the previous article, that there is no need to worry about hell, since St. Paul told us that "God wants all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). If God wills it, then everyone is automatically saved, some would say but they forget that God respects men's freedom. Each person can accept or refuse salvation. It is true to say that God is love, and that His mercy is infinite, but precisely because He is love, God respects the free will of human beings. Without freedom there can be no love: God does not force us to love Him, He does not impose Himself on us; our decision to love Him and our neighbour is entirely free.

In other words, even though God is almighty and died on the cross (and rose again!) for each of us, He cannot save us in spite of ourselves nor against our will. We must make an effort; we must cooperate with His plan of salvation and we must accept His salvation. Jesus said: "Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to perdition is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13).

We are all sinners and weak beings, and without God's grace we stumble. We were created for God, but original sin has broken us, leading us to selfishness and withdrawal, instead of loving God and our neighbour. St. Augustine offered this formula in his book, The City of God: "Two loves, then, have made two cities: love of self to the point of contempt for God, [which is] the earthly city; love of God to the point of contempt for self, [which is] the heavenly city."

The good news is that God does not abandon us nor does He leave us alone with only our limited human nature. He is mercy. The word "mercy" comes from the Latin "*misereo*" (to have mercy) and "*cor*" (heart), which indicates that God bends His heart over our miseries and comes to our aid through the sacraments, especially in Confession and the Eucharist, so that we may share with Him in His eternal wedding banquet and the happiness of Heaven.

We fall, but we must not remain in sin, we must rise again. St Augustine reminds us: "To err is human, to persist in error is diabolical." To fall into sin is human. To rise again is divine, but for that we need divine grace and God's forgiveness.

God rich in mercy

To understand all this, consider the second encyclical letter, dated November 30, 1980, written by St. John Paul II on Divine Mercy, entitled *Dives in Misericordia (*God rich in mercy), paragraph 13):

"Theologians affirm that mercy is the greatest of the attributes and perfections of God, and the Bible, Tradition and the whole faith life of the People of God provide particular proofs of this… The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy—the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer—and when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior's mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser.

"Of great significance in this area is constant meditation on the Word of God, and above all conscious and mature participation in the Eucharist and in the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. The Eucharist brings us ever nearer to that love which is more powerful than death… The Eucharistic rite, celebrated in memory of Him who in His messianic mission revealed the Father to us by means of His words and His cross, attests to the inexhaustible love by virtue of which He desires always to be united with us and present in our midst, coming to meet every human heart.

"It is the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation that prepares the way for each individual, even those weighed down with great faults. In this sacrament each person can experience mercy in a unique way, that is, the love which is more powerful than sin… It is precisely because sin exists in the world, which 'God so loved...that he gave his only Son,' (John 3:16) that God, who 'is love,' (1 John 4, 8) cannot reveal Himself otherwise than as mercy. This corresponds not only to the most profound truth of that love which God is, but also to the whole interior truth of man and of the world which is man's temporary homeland.

"Mercy in itself, as a perfection of the infinite God, is also infinite. Also infinite therefore and inexhaustible is the Father's readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to His home. Infinite are the readiness and power of forgiveness which flow continually from the marvelous value of the sacrifice of the Son.

"No human sin can prevail over this power or even limit it. On the part of man only a lack of good will can limit it, a lack of readiness to be converted and to repent, in other words persistence in obstinacy, opposing grace and truth, especially in the face of the witness of the cross and resurrection of Christ."

And the Holy Father adds that if we want to be forgiven by God, we must ourselves be merciful to our brothers and sisters, as Jesus teaches us in the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us". We must accept God's forgiveness not only in our words, but in our actions. Indeed, as it is written in the Gospel, it is not those who say "Lord, Lord" who will have eternal life, but those who do the will of His Father. And the Father's will is that we love Him, of course, but also our neighbour, for as it is written in Matthew 25: "What you did to the least of your brothers, you did to Me (Jesus)." Then we must orient our lives accordingly, by living the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

The seven corporal works of mercy are feeding the hungry; giving drink to the thirsty; clothing those who are naked; welcoming pilgrims; assisting the sick; visiting prisoners and burying the dead.

The seven spiritual works of mercy are to advise those in doubt; teach the ignorant; warn sinners; comfort the afflicted; forgive offences; put up with annoying people patiently and pray to God for the living and for the dead.

Sister Faustina and Divine Mercy

In 1931, Jesus appeared to a Polish nun, Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), asking her to paint a picture of Him with the words "Jesus, I trust in You", and to establish a feast of Divine Mercy in the universal Church. On 30 April 2000, Sister Faustina was declared a saint by Pope John Paul II, who established Mercy Sunday for the universal Church on the same day, to be celebrated every year on the first Sunday after Easter.

"I am Holy," Jesus said to Sister Faustina, "and the least sin abhors me. But when sinners repent, my Mercy is boundless... The greatest sinners could become very great saints if they trusted in my Mercy... My Mercy can only be drawn from the cup of trust. The more you trust, the more you get... It is a joy to me when sinners turn to my Mercy. I fill them beyond their hope." ❖

Alain Pilote

"Jesus, I trust in You!"

Here are excerpts from the homily of St. John Paul II for the canonization of Sister Faustina Kowalska on April 30, 2000:



Jesus told Sister Faustina: "Humanity will not find peace until it turns trustfully to Divine Mercy" (Diary, p. 132). (...) Christ has taught us that "man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but is also called 'to practise mercy' towards others: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' (Mt 5:7)" (*Dives in Misericordia*, no. 14). He also showed us the many paths of mercy, which not only forgives sins but reaches out to all human needs. Jesus bent over every kind of human poverty, material and spiritual.

In fact, love of God and love of one's brothers and sisters are inseparable, as the First Letter of John has reminded us: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His Commandments" (5: 2).

It is this love which must inspire humanity today,.. And you, Faustina, a gift of God to our time, a gift from the land of Poland to the whole Church, obtain for us an awareness of the depth of Divine Mercy; help us to have a living experience of it and to bear witness to it among our brothers and sisters. May your message of light and hope spread throughout the world, spurring sinners to conversion, calming rivalries and hatred, and opening individuals and nations to the practice of brotherhood. Today, fixing our gaze with you on the face of the risen Christ, let us make our own your prayer of trusting abandonment and say with firm hope: Christ Jesus, I trust in You! *Jezu, ufam tobie!* ❖

Has Praying the Rosary Become an Outdated Custom?

"The Rosary is my favorite prayer."

These were the words of Pope St. John Paul II in the second Angelus message of his pontificate in 1978, *"The Rosary is my favorite prayer. A marvelous prayer! Marvelous in its simplicity and in its depth."*

Anne Marie Jacques

A while ago I was speaking with a young father who said that he and his wife had "given up" on trying to pray the Rosary as a family because it was just too difficult and too frustrating to be disciplining the children while praying. They felt it was more important to stress the importance of Mass attendance and teaching the children the prayers of the Mass. This of course is also very important, but still, I tried to encourage this young family to also continue to persevere, as the Rosary is a very powerful prayer.

I could not stop thinking about our conversation and since then, having spoken with different people, come to the sad realization that so *many* have abandoned this daily practice of reciting the Rosary as a family, or even just praying it themselves. It even had me questioning myself as to whether or not it was not I who had become just a bit too "old fashioned"?!

I could sympathize with that young family, as my husband and I had always recited the Rosary with our seven children when they were growing up. I can remember the effort that went into it. Every evening, after we had finished supper and cleaned up the kitchen, we would round them all up and gather in the living room before our small altar. It would take a few minutes to calm everyone, but then each of them would recite their designated decade of the Rosary, beginning with the youngest. It was not always picture perfect, but we did persevere and the blessings that have come from this have been abundant!



There are so many more reasons why we *SHOULD* be praying the rosary, and *ESPECIALLY* as a family, than there are excuses *NOT* to!

- If you are suffering…pray the Rosary.
- If you are in need…pray the Rosary.
- If you are lonely...pray the Rosary.
- If you are worried…pray the Rosary.
- If your faith is wavering…Pray the Rosary.



A family praying the daily Rosary together
http://newtheologicalmovement.blogspot.com

- If your children have strayed from the Faith… Pray the Rosary.

In other words, there is nothing in your life that Our Blessed Mother does not desire to help you with!

Our Lady Requests the Daily Rosary

Sister Lucia (who died in 2005), speaking in an interview in 1957 with Father Fuentes, postulator of the causes for beatification of Francisco and Jacinta Marto (who have since been named saints in the Church), said: *"…There is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families, of the families in the world, or of the religious communities, or even of the life of peoples and nations that cannot be solved by the Rosary. With the Holy Rosary, we will save ourselves. We will sanctify ourselves. We will console Our Lord and obtain the salvation of many souls."*



St. Dominic receives the Rosary from the hands of Our Lady

In the sixth apparition at Fatima, Portugal, the Blessed Mother identified herself as *"Our Lady of the Rosary"* and it is she who has asked us to say this very powerful prayer. She did not only ask this at Fatima, but she came first to St. Dominic in 1208, and has repeatedly come again and again with the same message to *"Pray the Rosary every day"*, at Lourdes, Kibeho, Akita, San Nicolas, Cuapa, Gietrzwald and so many more places!

Recently I rediscovered the writings of Barbara Kloss, a Polish mystic, who died in 1981. Our Lady dictated to her these beautiful words:

"The Rosary must be the joy of your heart, the light of your thoughts, the ardent desire of your will, the link which unites you to Heaven. It is the unfathomable source of the treasures which I offer you through my immaculate hands…It depends on you alone to accept it and to recite it.

In these messages we hear the voice of a mother — a mother who loves and understands her children as she instructs us on how we can make it possible to say these prayers,

"Just offer your time, a humble and pious disposition and a bit of effort to collect your thoughts while reciting it. Do not be greedy of the time you devote to it. Do not leave it for the last hour of the day, thinking that there will be sufficient time for it.

"The rest is the grace, the action of the Holy Spirit, who gives us the knowledge of the Saviour in His mysteries. [In the Rosary we meditate on the mysteries of the Life of Christ.] The Rosary belongs to you. It is given to you forever. You have it for every moment and for every need, and it depends on you to profit from it and to act through it. It demands fidelity and perseverance."

Wherever we are — no matter what crisis we are undergoing — at work, or at play — we are able to recite the Rosary and meditate on its Mysteries. Our Lady reiterated to Barbara Kloss the same message she gave at Fatima,

"Jesus wants Me to be known more and loved more," and she added, "Myself, I want that the Heart of My triumphant Son reign everywhere in your hearts. And both of us want your happiness, your good, for the glory of the Heavenly Father."

For centuries the Rosary has been the object of papal praise

The Holy Spirit has inspired Popes over the centuries to encourage the faithful to trust in the power of the Rosary. Emphasizing fidelity to the practice of the Rosary has been the means for peoples and nations to persevere in Christian faith and morals. Pope Leo XIII wrote no less than 16 documents completely on the Rosary! Other papal claims include:

"If the Liturgy [the Holy Mass]*, as the activity of Christ and the Church, is a saving action par excellence, the Rosary too, as a 'meditation' with Mary on Christ, is a salutary contemplation. By immersing us in the mysteries of the Redeemer's life* [the Rosary]*, it ensures that what he has done and what the liturgy makes present is profoundly assimilated and shapes our existence." – Pope St. John Paul II*

Yes! the Mass is the prayer of prayers — nothing can compare with the powerful prayer of the Holy Mass! But when you add to that the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary, the demons flee in terror! Fr. Gabriele Amorth, exorcist in the Diocese of Rome, revealed these words given to him by Satan through a possessed person during an exorcism: *"Every Hail Mary of the Rosary is a blow to the head for me;* ***if Christians knew the power of the Rosary, it would be the end of me!"***

When we are praying the Rosary we are living in ▶

The Rosary has been the 0bject of papal praise

"We earnestly exhort all Christians to give themselves to the recital of the pious devotion of the Rosary publicly, or privately in their own house and family, and that unceasingly." – Pope Leo XIII

"If you recite the Family Rosary, all united, you shall taste peace." – Pope John XXIII

"The Rosary is a treasure of graces." – Pope Paul V

"The Rosary is the most beautiful and the richest of all prayers to the Mediatrix of all grace; It is the prayer that touches most the heart of the Mother of God. Say it each day!" – Pope Saint Pius X

"Our need of divine help is as great today as when the great Dominic introduced the use of the Rosary of Mary as a balm for the wounds of his contemporaries." – Pope Leo XIII

"The fathers and mothers of families particularly must give an example to their children, especially when, at sunset, they gather after the day's work, within the domestic walls, and recite the Holy Rosary on bended knees before the image of the Virgin." – Pope Pius XI

"Mary constantly sets before the faithful the 'mysteries' of her Son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power." – Pope St. John Paul II

"Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world." – Blessed Pope Pius IX



Aaron & Hur had to come to his aid and hold his arms up for him

of the day with each other and to thank God together for the blessings of that day.

What my friend is discovering is that, when Our Blessed Mother asks us to "pray the Rosary", we need not understand the whys and hows; we need only to obey — God does the rest.

Our Lady revealed to Barbara Kloss, and she continued, *"The Rosary is My gift, the gift of the Mother to Her poor children. It is the visible sign of protection and the seal of the elect. It is the joy of the angels and the rejoicing of the saints. It is the terror and the fright of the devils who are overcome by it. It is the simplest and shortest contact of Heaven with earth. It is the treasure of the poor and the strength of the brave. It is finally the joy of duty accomplished with love. It is the hope of the reward that will be obtained here below as in eternity.*

And therefore, a custom that can never become outdated. Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Pray for us! ✠

the presence of Christ and His Holy Mother. ***"I am present for all in the Rosary, it is there that you will find me"***, Our Lady revealed to Barbara Kloss. We cannot comprehend the power of this repeated prayer, no more than Moses understood the significance of his arms being held up during the battle, but as long as he kept his arms raised, Joshua was winning the battle. When he would grow tired and lower his arms, Joshua would begin to be overcome by his enemies. Aaron & Hur had to come to his aid and hold his arms up for him, and it was only then that Joshua was able to defeat the Amalekites.

Ass I was concluding this article, I received a message from my young friend of whom I spoke at the beginning. He wanted to let me know that he and his wife have taken up the good practice of reciting the Rosary once again with their children every evening — praised be Jesus Christ! They were excited to tell me that what they have discovered is that, with much patience, the family Rosary has become the time for them to settle down in the evening, to share their experiences



Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us!



Our Lady of the Rosary of Las Lajas

By Anne Marie Jacques

The following history of the apparitions of Our Lady of Las Lajas *in Guaitara Canyon, Colombia in 1754 is mostly sourced from the website:* http://interfaithmary.net/blog/las-lajas

The Apparitions

In the 18th century, Maria Mueses de Quiñones, a woman from the village of Potosí, Colombia, often walked the six miles between her village and the neighboring one of Ipiales. One day, in 1754, as she was approaching the bridge across the Guaitara River at a place called *Las Lajas* (which translates in English as flat, slippery rocks), a terrible storm came up. Frightened, the poor woman took refuge in a cave on the side of the path. Feeling a bit spooked and alone, she began to invoke Our Lady of the Rosary, who had been made popular in the region by Dominican friars. She suddenly felt that someone was touching her back and calling her. She turned around, but saw no one. In terror she fled to Potosí.

Days later, Maria returned once more to Ipiales, carrying her daughter Rosa, who was deaf and mute on her back, in the native way. After she had climbed to Las Lajas, she was tired and sat on a rock to rest. The child clambered down from her mother's back and started climbing around the rocks. Soon she exclaimed: *"Mommy, Mommy, there is a white woman here with a boy in her arms!"* Maria was shocked as this was the first time she had heard her daughter speak. She was also frightened because she could not see the figures the girl was referring to. So she grabbed the child and hastened on to Ipiales.

When she told friends and relatives what had happened, no one believed her. So she simply



Statue of Maria Mueses de Quiñones at the site of the Apparition
https://medellinguru.com/las-lajas-sanctuary/

conducted her business and went home to Potosí. When she came to the cave Rosa yelled: *"Mommy, the white woman is calling me!"* Maria still couldn't see anything and so she hurried to take her daughter far away from this apparently haunted place. Back at home, she told other friends what had happened. This time, since the path by that cave was much traveled, the news of something supernatural happening spread quickly.

A few days later, the child Rosa disappeared from her home. After looking everywhere, the anguished mother guessed that her daughter must have gone to the cave, because the child had often said that the white lady was calling her. Maria ran to Las Lajas and was overjoyed to find her daughter kneeling in front of the white lady and playing affectionately with the child who had come down from his mother's arms to be with Rosa.

Maria fell to her knees before this beautiful spectacle. She had seen the Blessed Virgin and the Divine Infant for the first time!

Fearful of ridicule from the people who had not believed her previous accounts, Maria kept quiet about the episode. But she and Rosa frequently went to the cave to place wild flowers and candles in the cracks of the rocks.

Time passed, and Maria and Rosa kept their secret. But one day ▶

the girl fell gravely ill and died suddenly. The distraught mother decided to take her daughter's body to the feet of the *Lady of Guáitara*, as she had come to call her. Arriving there, she reminded the Virgin of all the flowers and candles Rosa had brought her, and the poor mother begged the lady to restore Rosa to life.

The Blessed Virgin, moved by the sadness of Maria's unrelenting supplications, granted Rosa's miraculous return to life. Overjoyed, Maria went to Ipiales. She arrived at night time and told everyone what had happened. Those who had already gone to bed arose and began ringing the church bells. Soon a great crowd had gathered in front of the church to hear what had occurred.

The Miracle

At daybreak, everyone went to the cave. There was no more doubt now that a miracle had occurred. All the villagers knew of the death of little Rosa, and now here she was, alive and well! Arriving at the cave, they could see a supernatural light streaming from inside. Going in, they saw, engraved into the rock wall, the image of the Most Holy Virgin holding the child Jesus in her arms.


https://medellinguru.com/las-lajas-sanctuary/

The miraculous image that appeard on the rock at Las Lajas

Both were smiling sweetly. The Virgin's hair was long and dark brown, extending to about the elbow. Her eyes were large and innocent, and her garments beautiful to behold. On one side stood Saint Dominic, and on the other, Saint Francis of Assisi. Mary, holding a Rosary, was extending her hand toward Saint Dominic. The Holy Infant held a Franciscan cord which he appeared to be giving to Saint Francis.


https://medellinguru.com/las-lajas-sanctuary/

The spiritual sons of these two holy saints were responsible for the conversion of the people of Central and South America, and to this day, the sanctuary is under the pastoral care of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate.

This image of Our Lady of Las Lajas was clearly of miraculous origin. The colors have not lost any of their brilliance over the centuries, and have been proven to not be a paint or a coloring applied to the surface of the stone.

Geologists from Germany took core samples from several spots in the image. Their investigations found no paint, dye, nor any other pigment on the surface of the rock. The colors are the rock itself. Even more incredible, the rock is perfectly colored to a depth of several feet.

The Church

The oldest record of this holy place comes from the travel accounts of the Franciscan friar, Juan de Santa Gertrudis. He was a blind monk who, between the years 1756 and 1764 traveled on foot from Ecuador to Nariño, Colombia, begging for money to build the first chapel in Las Lajas. At its completion, Friar Juan miraculously regained his vision, which he attributed to his own deep faith and trust in the Virgin Mary of Las Lajas.

Over time a much larger sanctuary was needed to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims who traveled there every year. Today's church was built between January 1, 1916 and August 20, 1949, solely from generous donations made by the local people.

In 1951, Church officials finally approved *Nuestra Señora de Las Lajas* as an authentic miracle, and in 1954 declared the sanctuary as a minor basilica.


Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Las Lajas by Diego Delso, *https://commons.wikimedia.org/*


Images: https://medellinguru.com/las-lajas-sanctuary/

Each year, on September 16th, the anniversary of the apparition, thousands of pilgrims come from all over to honor the Virgin and to pray to her.

On Maundy Thursday of Holy Week, pilgrims come from several nearby cities in Colombia and also from Ecuador, some walking as much as 12 hours to honor the *Mestiza*, the name given to the Virgin meaning *"the woman of mixed Spanish-Indian race"*.

Over the course of the centuries, pilgrims have left countless *ex-votos* on the rock walls all the way from the village into the canyon of the sanctuary. These offerings attest to the mercy and miraculous power of the Madonna through the many miracles and favors received by the people that have come to her in faith. ✝

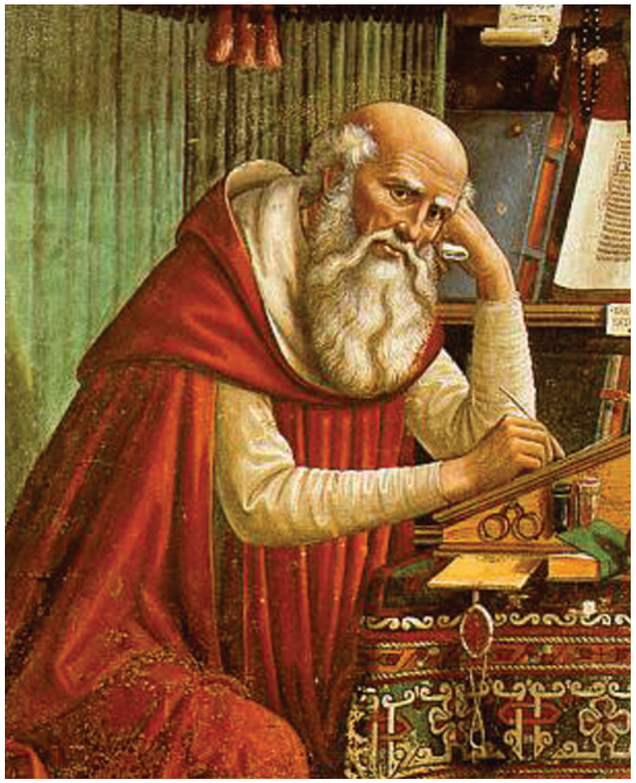

Ex-votos are placed on the rock walls all the way from the village into the canyon

"To ignore Scripture is to ignore Christ"

Life of Saint Jerome, translator of the Bible

In 383, Pope Damasus I chose Saint Jerome as his secretary and asked him to translate the four Gospels into Latin. When the pope died, Jerome left Rome and returned to Palestine with Paula, a Roman noblewoman. They founded a double monastery in Bethlehem. During the last 34 years of his life, Jerome devoted himself to the composition of a Latin text of the Old and New Testaments that would be more faithful to the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

He died in 420, and his remains were first buried in Jerusalem, and later transferred to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, one of the four great basilicas in Rome. Since Boniface VIII in 1298, he has been one of the Doctors of the Church. His translation of the Bible is the centrepiece of the Vulgate, the Latin translation officially recognised by the Catholic Church. Thanks to Saint Jerome, we have a reliable version of the Word of God. This leads to a question that each of us must ask ourselves: to what extent do we put the Word of God into practice in our lives? Here is a summary of the life of this great saint, as published in the January 2021 letter of the Abbey of Saint Joseph of Clairval[1].



Saint Jerome in his study, by Domenico Ghirlandaio, 1480, church of Ognissanti, Florence

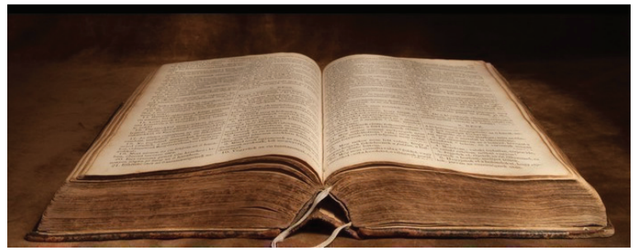
by Dom Antoine Marie OSB

Saint Jerome "centered his life on the Bible: he translated it into Latin, commented on it in his works, and above all, strove to live it in practice throughout his long earthly life, despite the well-known difficult, hot-tempered character with which nature had endowed him" according to the words of Pope Benedict XVI delivered to a General Audience on November 7, 2007.

This Father of the Church described himself thusly: "I am at once a philosopher, a rhetorician, a grammarian, a dialectician, and an expert in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." Such were the weapons of the polemicist who, in his passion, went so far as to insult the Bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine—who was his junior by ten years—as if he were addressing a student: "Heed my advice, young man. Do not wander into the realm of Scripture and provoke an old man ! You are disturbing my peace. You just flaunt your science."

St. Jerome was born around 345 in Stridon, a fortified town on the borders of the provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia (in present-day Hungary). His father Eusebius was a wealthy landowner. Jerome proudly stated, "I was born a Christian, of Christian parents, bearing the banner of the Cross on my forehead." Yet he was given a pagan name, Hieronymus (meaning "one whose name is sacred"), or Jerome, in English. As was the custom at the time, he was not baptized but simply inscribed in the register of catechumens. Of his childhood, Jerome later said: "I remember frolicking through the slaves' small bedrooms, spending my free day playing, and then being torn from my grandmother's arms to be delivered, captive, to the fury of a man named Olybrius." This particular Olybrius was a schoolmaster with cruel educational methods, and young Jerome "cried under the whack of his stick." He was a rowdy and mischievous student, with a keen intelligence and excellent memory. Jerome was extremely sensitive, which made him touchy and quick to take offense, but also very affectionate and open to others.

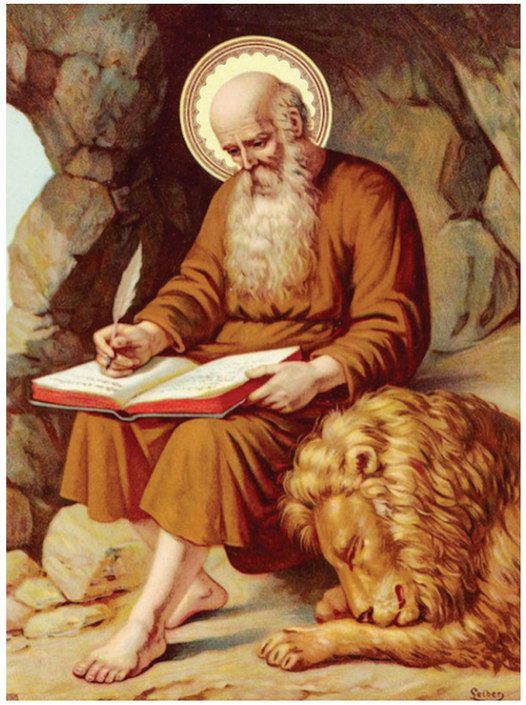
1 https://www.clairval.com/index.php/en/letter/?id=2060121



"How could one live without the knowledge of Scripture, through which one learns to know Christ himself, who is the life of believers?" – *Saint Augustine*

"A choir of the blessed"

His parents sent him to Rome to complete his studies. There, under the guidance of the finest teachers, he learned rhetoric, the art of speaking well, and dialectics, the art of discussion. He built up a library by hand-copying, "with great care and effort," works by his favorite authors: Plautus, Virgil, and Cicero. However, he was also eager for entertainment: his ardent nature craved for expression, and though he did not indulge in pleasure with the fire of an Augustine, he did sometimes give in to his passions. He would later describe how he went astray "among the dances of Roman maidens".



According to the Golden Legend, St. Jerome encountered a lion with a thorn in its paw, and the lion (a symbol of the desert) allowed Jerome to heal it. The legend goes on to say that the lion became Jerome's pet, which led to many depictions of Jerome with a lion.

Nevertheless, his religious spirit drove him to visit the catacombs with friends on Sundays. At last, he was touched by grace and decided to ask to be baptized in 366. Jerome moved on to Trier, where the Emperor Valentinia had established himself, because to please his family, he was seeking a position in the administration. Once there, however, his discovery of the monastic life led him to sober thought. Deeply moved, he decided to shun all things worldly, and turned his interest to Christian literature. Driven by his new-found dispositions, he returned to Aquileia in Italy, where he joined a group of devout Christians that had formed around Bishop Valerian: he described them as a "choir of the blessed." In 374, he made the sudden decision to depart eastwards, with the purpose of entering the monastic life.

After a long and harrowing journey, exhausted by fever, Jerome arrived at the house of a priest in Antioch of Syria: Evagrius, a friend he had met in Aquileia. There he stayed, finding joy in his quiet and studious life. However, it was not strictly speaking a monastic life. He fell ill in Lent in 375, and in the course of his illness received a dream in which he was reproached for his excessive attachment to secular writings: "Suddenly I was caught up in the spirit and dragged before the judgment seat of the Judge. Asked who and what I was I replied: 'I am a Christian.' But He who presided said: 'You lie; you are a follower of Cicero, and not of Christ. For where your treasure is, there will thy heart be also.'"

Under the intense torments of his conscience, Jerome gave up secular books. He chose to seclude himself in the desert of Chalcis, south of Aleppo (Syria), practicing strict asceticism, while earnestly devoting himself to the study of Greek ▶

and Hebrew. Meditation, solitude, and closeness to the Word of God stoked his interest in reading the Bible. However, he was in poor health and suffered from the deprivations he imposed on himself: "My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting; yet my mind was burning with desire, and the fires of lust kept bubbling up before me when my flesh was as good as dead."

Illuminating guidance

The Church of Antioch was torn apart by schism at the time. When Jerome was asked to take a stance, he appealed to the Pope but received no answer. The Arian monks, for their part, waited not. They pestered Jerome with their quarrels to the point that the desert became abhorrent to him. Disillusioned, he returned to Antioch in 377, where he was ordained a priest by Bishop Paulinus.

In 379, Jerome moved to Constantinople to continue his biblical studies under the enlightened guidance of Gregory of Nazianzus, a theologian and exegete. A sincere friendship developed between the two men. It was at this time that he discovered Origen and began to develop an Exegesis (i.e. a study of the sacred text) based on the original texts in Hebrew and Greek.

In 382, Bishop Paulinus and Epiphanius of Salamis invited him to accompany them to Rome, where they wanted to inform Pope Damascus of troublesome events in the Orient. Jerome wholeheartedly accepted. The saintly Pope, who was aware of Jerome's reputation as an ascetic and of his scholarly excellence, asked him to serve as his secretary and consulted with him on the meaning of obscure passages of Scripture. He urged him to undertake a new Latin translation of the biblical texts.

"Jerome's literary studies and vast erudition enabled him to revise and translate many biblical texts: an invaluable undertaking for the Latin Church and for Western culture. On the basis of the original Greek and Hebrew texts, and thanks to the comparison with previous versions, he revised the four Gospels in Latin, then the Psalter and a large part of the Old Testament. Jerome was able to produce a better translation: this constitutes the so-called Vulgate, the official text of the Latin Church which was recognized as such by the Council of Trent" and which remains so today after the recent revision of 1979 (Benedict XVI, November 7, 2007).



Paula with her daughter Saint Eustochium and Saint Jerome, a peinting by Francisco de Zurbarán.

Marcella, a Roman widow in search of a spiritual director and a master who could explain the Scriptures to her, asked Jerome for help. She soon organized a study circle of wealthy widows in her palace. This circle included Marcellina, the sister of Ambrose of Milan; Paula and her daughters Blesilla, Eustochium, and Paulina, and many others. Some of them are now honored as saints. Jerome shared with his avid students the best of his research and the benefits of his spiritual direction. A letter to Eustochium would become famous:

"Like the Ark of the Covenant, Christ's spouse should be overlaid with gold within and without. She should be the guardian of the Law of the Lord. Just as the Ark contained nothing but the Tables of the Covenant, so in you there should be no thought of anything that is outside. Let no one dare to forbid you, neither mother nor sister nor kinswoman nor brother: 'The Lord has need of you.' Should they seek to hinder you, let them fear the scourges

"Saint Jerome exhorts parents to create a serene and joyful environment around their children, to stimulate them to study and work also through praise and emulation, encouraging them to overcome difficulties, foster good habits and avoid picking up bad habits."

— Benedict XVI



that fell on Pharaoh, who, because he would not let God's people go so that they might serve Him, suffered the plagues described in Scripture." It was a powerful defense of the monastic life and virginity, and was widely distributed, but it shocked the high society of Rome. To a number of clerics, this manifesto for an evangelical life felt like it was aimed at them, and they would not forgive its author for criticizing them so harshly, or for having publicly put his finger on their shortcomings. In their jealousy of his power of influence, they accused him of forgery and sacrilege for daring to introduce changes to the biblical texts that had been accepted until then. Their anger eventually burst into slanderous claims against Jerome and his saintly friends: what was this monk doing amongst all these ladies? Jerome cleverly replied, "If men asked about Scripture, I would not speak to women!"

An exhilarating journey

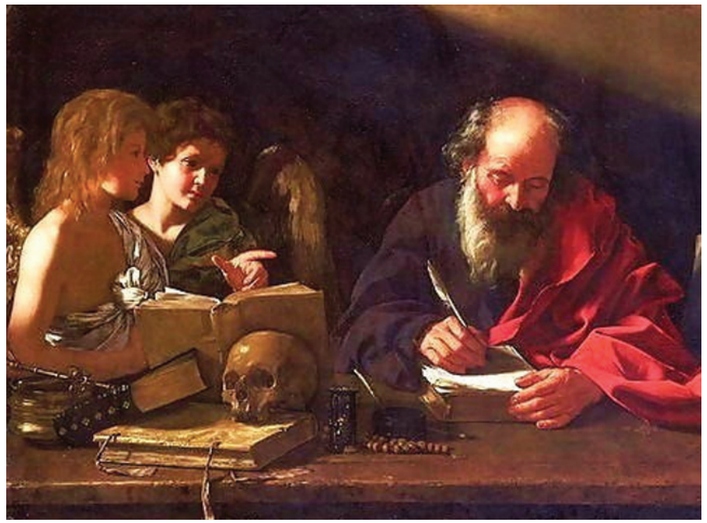
After Pope Damascus died on December 11th, 384, Jerome decided to fulfil his lifelong dream. In August, 385, he left for the Middle East with his brother Paulinian and several monks who were determined to settle with him in the Holy Land. Paula and her daughter Eustochium joined them in Antioch some time later. A caravan was formed with the mission of taking them to Judea in the very heart of winter. One of Jerome's letters describes Paula's enthusiasm for visiting holy places. The pilgrims continued their journey to Egypt and Alexandria, home to a great biblical school that followed the teachings of Origen and Athanasius the Great. The school was headed by Didymus the Blind; Jerome became one of his disciples. The pilgrims also took advantage of their trip to visit the monks of Egypt, the famous "Fathers of the Desert."

In 386, the small group returned to Bethlehem where, thanks to Paula's generosity, a monastery for the monks, a convent for the nuns and a fortified tower were promptly built, as well as a hostel for pilgrims to the Holy Land, "since they remembered that in these parts Mary and Joseph had not found a place to stay." Jerome here found a place of quiet where he joyfully resumed his work: biblical translations and commentaries, history, polemics, hagiography, etc. Paula assumed the direction of the convent as did Jerome of the monastery, but it was he who provided the appropriate spiritual guidance to all, based on Sacred Scripture. The Bible, which he assimilated to Christ, held an essential place in their community life. "Love the Holy Scriptures and wisdom will love you; your tongue must know only Christ, and say only that which is sacred," he said.

Benedict XVI emphasized this Doctor of the Church's love for the Word of God. "St. Jerome said, 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.' It is therefore important that every Christian lives in contact and in personal dialogue with the Word of God given to us in Sacred Scripture. This dialogue with Scripture must be truly personal because God speaks with each one of us through Sacred Scripture and it has a message for each one. We must not read Sacred Scripture as a word of the past but as the Word of God that is also addressed to us, and we must try to understand what it is that the Lord wants to tell us. The Word of God transcends time. Human opinions come and go. What is very modern today will be very antiquated tomorrow. On the other hand, the Word of God is the Word of eternal life. lit bears within it eternity and is valid forever. By carrying the Word of God within us we therefore carry within us eternity, eternal life" (November 7, 2007).

"Love it tenderly"

St. Jerome, continued Pope Benedict, "recommended to one of his spiritual daughters: 'Love Sacred Scripture. Love it tenderly, and it will protect you.' And again: 'Love the science of Scripture, and you will not love the vices of the flesh.' For Jerome, a fundamental criterion of the method for interpreting the Scriptures was harmony with the Church's Magisterium. We should never read Scripture alone because we meet too many closed doors and could easily slip into error.



St.Jerome visited by angels, 17th Century, by Bartolomeo Cavarozzi

For him, an authentic interpretation of the Bible must always be in harmonious accord with the faith of the Catholic Church. Therefore, Jerome admonished: 'Remain firmly attached to the traditional doctrine that you have been taught, so that you can preach according to right doctrine and refute those who contradict it.' In particular, given that Jesus Christ founded his Church on Peter, every Christian… must be in communion with St. Peter's See. I know that on this rock the Church is built.' Consequently, without equivocation, he declared: 'I am with whoever is united to the teaching of St. Peter'" (General Audience, November 14, 2007).

Before long, however, the Origenist quarrels (which deny the definitive character of God's judgment), followed by the fight against Pelagianism (which claim that the initiative for salvation originates in man and denies original sin), prompted Jerome to vigorously defend the faith. There were times when his pen was like a razor-sharp stylus. At the same time, barbarian invasions that brought crowds of refugees to the Holy Land forced him to put aside his beloved studies in order to fulfil his charitable duties. Nevertheless, he persevered in the holy work to which he had dedicated himself. His cell became a kind of beacon for the entire Christian world and souls eager for perfection turned to him. This resulted in an extensive and varied correspondence with the best minds of his time. In response to a person asking for advice, Jerome explained the importance of community life: "I would rather that you live in a holy community, and that you not teach yourself, nor embark without a master on a path that is entirely new to you." He recommended moderation in bodily fasts: "A modest diet, but one that is also reasonable, is good for both body and soul." He often recalled that a courageous commitment to perfection requires constant vigilance, frequent mortifications—albeit with discretion—, diligent intellectual or manual work to avoid idleness, but above all obedience to God: "Nothing pleases God as much as obedience, which is the most excellent and sole virtue" (Hom. de Obœdientia: CCL 78, 552).

"Adorn this shrine!"

The Gospel, commented Pope Benedict XVI, "must translate into truly charitable behavior. For example, addressing the presbyter Paulinus (who then became Bishop of Nola and a Saint), Jerome counselled: 'The true temple of Christ is the soul of the faithful: adorn it and beautify this shrine, place your offerings in it and receive Christ. What is the use of decorating the walls with precious stones if Christ dies of hunger in the person of the poor?' Jerome made concrete the need 'to clothe Christ in the poor, to visit him in the suffering, to nourish him in the hungry, to house him in the homeless.' The love of Christ, nourished with study and meditation, makes us rise above every difficulty: 'Let us also love Jesus Christ, always seeking union with him: then even what is difficult will seem easy to us'" (November 14, 2007).

Pope Emeritus Benedict also emphasized "the importance that Jerome gave to the matter of Christian pedagogy. He proposed to form 'one soul that must become the temple of the Lord,' a 'very precious gem' in the eyes of God. With profound intuition, he advises to preserve oneself from evil and the occasions of sin and to exclude equivocal or dissipating friendships. Above all, he exhorts parents to create a serene and joyful environment around their children, to stimulate them to study and work also through praise and emulation, encouraging them to overcome difficulties, foster good habits and avoid picking up bad habits. Parents are the principal educators of their children, the first teachers of life. With great clarity Jerome, addressing a young girl's mother, admonished: 'May she find in you her teacher, and may she look to you with the inexperienced wonder of childhood. Neither in you, nor in her father should she ever see behavior that could lead to sin, as it could be copied. Remember that you can educate her more by example than with words.' Moreover, an aspect rather disregarded in ancient times but held vital by our author is the promotion of the woman, to whom he recognizes the right to a complete formation: human, scholastic, religious and professional. We see precisely today how the education of the personality in its totality, the education of responsibility before God and man, is the true condition of all progress, all peace, all reconciliation, and the exclusion of violence. Education before God and man: it is Sacred Scripture that offers us the guide for education and thus of true humanism" (Ibid.).

Better beg for bread than lose the faith

In the last years of his life, Jerome faced many ordeals. St. Paula, ever his faithful friend, died in 404. In 410, the Visigoth King Alaric I invaded Italy and sacked Rome. It was a tragedy in which Jerome recognized the collapse of a world, and he moaned, "the Roman Empire was decapitated, and, to speak more correctly, the whole world perished in one city". St. Marcella's convent was looted, and she herself was tortured and died soon after. In 416, monks supporting Pelagius went on a punitive expedition to Judea against the Hieronymian monasteries. A deacon was killed, the buildings were set on fire. The fortified tower served as a refuge; Jerome barely escaped death. He wrote, not without pride: "As for our house, so far as fleshly wealth is concerned, it is completely destroyed by the onslaughts of the heretics; but by the mercy of Christ it is still filled with spiritual riches. To beg one's bread is better than to lose the faith." In 418, he was devastated by the unexpected death of Eustochium, who had succeeded her mother Paula as the head of the women's monastery. She had greatly assisted him in his work. This death, he wrote, "almost changed the conditions of our existence, because we are no longer able to do many of the things we would like to do: the spirit is strong, but it is defeated by the feebleness of old age". His last letter was to Augustine and his friend Alypius: "Every opportunity of writing to you, revered fathers, is most acceptable to me. I call God to witness that, if it were possible, I would take the wings of a dove and fly to be folded in your embrace. Loving you, indeed, as I have always done, from a deep sense of your worth, but now especially because your co-operation and your leadership have succeeded in strangling the heresy of Celestius (a disciple of Pelagius), which you have completely stifled by your zeal and by your care. May the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve you safe and mindful of me" (Letter 143). Crippled with infirmities and almost blind, the faithful servant peacefully fell asleep in the Lord on September 30, 420. He was buried near the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem. His remains, which were brought back to Rome in the 8th century, are now in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, near to the relics of Jesus' manger that Jerome himself had carefully reassembled.

According to the Second Vatican Council, "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the Word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life" (*Dei Verbum* Constitution, No. 21). Let us follow the example of St. Jerome and set aside time each day to meditate on the Word of God, either directly or with the help of commentaries from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. As Jerome said, "How could one live without the knowledge of Scripture, through which one learns to know Christ himself, who is the life of believers?"

Dom Antoine Marie osb.

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