

Into the Deep

Issue 210

Newsletter of orthodox Catholics of Gippsland

November 2020

The Mass

Quotes from St John Vianney

- Holy Communion and the holy sacrifice of the Mass are the two most efficacious actions to obtain the conversion of hearts.
- It's not enough to be bodily present at the Mass; it's necessary to attend with the intention of listening and listening with attention.
- The best way to attend Mass is to unite oneself to the priest in everything that he says, to follow each of his actions as much as one can; to be quiet in order to penetrate the most living sentiments of love and recognition.
- All the prayers of the Mass are a preparation for Communion.
- If I attend Holy Mass, I unite my spirit and my heart to the holy intentions of Jesus.
- One should consecrate at least 15 minutes to prepare well to attend Mass.
- The whole life of a Christian has to be a preparation for this great action.

Fr Roger J. Landry, Catholicpreaching.com

It Is Possible

Pope Benedict XVI, 01-11-2006

Holiness demands a constant effort, but it is possible for everyone because, rather than a human effort, it is first and foremost a gift of God, thrice Holy. [...]The Apostle John remarks: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1Jn 3: 1).

It is God, therefore, who loved us first and made us his adoptive sons in Jesus. Everything in our lives is a gift of his love: how can we be indifferent before such a great mystery? How can we not respond to the Heavenly Father's love by living as grateful children? In Christ, he gave us the gift of his entire self and calls us to a personal and profound relationship with him.

Consequently, the more we imitate Jesus and remain united to him the more we enter into the mystery of his divine holiness. We discover that he loves us infinitely, and this prompts us in turn to love our brethren. Loving always entails an act of self-denial, "losing ourselves", and it is precisely this that makes us happy.

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All The More Precious

Pope John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly, 1999

13. The Christian community can receive much from the serene presence of older people. I think first of all in terms of evangelization: its effectiveness does not depend principally on technical expertise. In how many families are grandchildren taught the rudiments of the faith by their grandparents! There are many other areas where the elderly can make a beneficial contribution. The Spirit acts as and where he wills, and quite frequently he employs human means which seem of little account in the eyes of the world. How many people find understanding and comfort from elderly people who may be lonely or ill and yet are able to instil courage by their loving advice, their silent prayers, or their witness of suffering borne with patient acceptance! At the very time when their physical energies and their level of activity are decreasing, these brothers and sisters of ours become all the more precious in the mysterious plan of Providence.

All issues of *Into the Deep* are at www.stoneswillshout.com

Changes to Indulgences this November

Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary, 22-10-2020

[...]he Apostolic Penitentiary, on special mandate of His Holiness Pope Francis, willingly establishes and decides that this year, to avoid gatherings where they are prohibited:

a. The Plenary Indulgence for those that visit a cemetery and pray for the deceased even if only mentally, as established in the norm only in the individual days from November 1 to 8, can be transferred to other days of the same month until its end. Such days, freely chosen by individual faithful, can also be separated from each other;

b. The Plenary Indulgence of November 2, established on the occasion of the Commemoration of all the deceased faithful, for all those that piously visit a Church or an Oratory and recite there the "Our Father" and the "Creed," can be transferred not only to the preceding or the following Sunday or to the day of the Solemnity of All Saints, but also to another day of the month of November, to the free choice of individual faithful.

The elderly, the sick and all those that for grave reasons cannot leave their home, for instance, because of restrictions imposed by the competent authority for the time of the pandemic, in order to avoid numerous faithful crowding in sacred places, will be able to obtain the Plenary Indulgence provided that, united spiritually to all the other faithful, completely detached from sin and with the intention of complying as soon as possible with the three usual conditions (Sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion and Prayer according to the Intentions of the Holy Father), recite, before an image of Jesus or of the Blessed Virgin Mary, pious prayers for the dead, for example, the Praises and Vespers of the Office of the Dead, the Marian Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, other prayers for the dearest deceased of the faithful or spend time in meditative reading of one of the evangelical passages proposed by the Liturgy of the Dead, or carry out a work of mercy, offering to God the pains and hardships of their life.

For an easier obtaining of the grace through pastoral charity, this Penitentiary prays heartily that all priests equipped with the opportune faculties, may offer themselves with particular generosity to the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and administer Holy Communion to the sick. ...

Finally, in order that the souls in Purgatory be helped by the intercessions of the faithful and especially with the Sacrifice of the Altar that is pleasing to God..., all priests are warmly invited to celebrate Holy Mass three times on the day of the Commemoration of the deceased faithful... .

The present Decree is valid for the whole month of November, despite any contrary disposition.

Translation by Virginia M. Forrester, Zenit.org 23-10-2020

Appreciated

I really appreciated, and thought it was beautiful, the July article, page 9, "It's all about the Mass." And thank you for all the work that goes on continually to produce this fine paper. Please find cheque enclosed.

Helen Casanova, Westmere, Victoria

In checking the reference to the above-mentioned article, I was mortified to notice that I had inadvertently cut off the name of the author – Gregory Kingman, Morwell, Victoria. I have since corrected this on the online version of ITD. My apologies have been extended to the author (my very understanding husband!) and I apologise to all who have printed copies with the error. **Ed.**

Time to Wake Up

Fr Thomas Rosica, Zenit.org 23-11-2010

Time is central to the Christian celebration of Advent. This season reminds us that the mystery of faith is not complete until Jesus' Second Coming. ... How do we deal with the issue of time? Christ has given us warning of such an event coming. We can't say, "We had no idea," as the people said up to the day that Noah went into the ark and closed the door.

We need to be ready and we need to be awake. Just like a security alarm wakes up a homeowner, Advent wakes up Christians who are in danger of sleeping through their lives. If we are no longer asking the hard questions and if we are no longer getting our answers from God through his Scriptures, then it is time to wake up!

Eugenics Then and Now

I recently read a report on the issue of eugenic abortion in Poland. Last year there was a case put to the Constitutional Tribunal to see if the abortion of sick children violates the current Polish Constitution. A ruling this month stated that "abortion, in the case of a high probability of severe and irreversible impairment of the fetus or an incurable disease that threatens its life, is inconsistent with the Polish Constitution" (Zenit.org 23-10-2020).

Thank God for that! But it struck me how much society has changed since the eugenics of the Nazi era. Eugenics was considered horrific, abhorrent, completely unacceptable and immoral, coming from the minds of evil, crazed men, and most people cannot comprehend how eugenics could ever have happened.

Yet now, with abortion, eugenics is considered a given, no big deal, a sensible option for parents faced with a diagnosis of their unborn child that makes the child less than perfect. Upright, reputable doctors pressure women into abortion if the child is likely to have any sort of disability. Many parents feel like they're being selfish or heartless if they choose to carry the child to term, knowing he or she is going to be a 'burden' on society. Some abort their child with a heavy heart, believing what they've been told, that it's the 'responsible' thing to do.

But I'd like to know how many people with a cleft palate, or Down's syndrome, or a hearing loss, or a club foot, or a congenital heart disorder, or no arms, or a disease that runs in the family, or are in wheelchairs because they were never able to walk – how many of these people would agree that they should have been killed before birth, that their lives are not worth living, and that they don't possess human dignity because they're different?

I'd also like to know if anyone knows anyone who is *not* 'different', who does not have 'issues', who is not 'perfect' – of course we do! None of us is perfect! But our non-physical imperfections didn't show up on ultrasounds or genetic testing, so we 'got through' and were allowed to be born. Why should anyone with physical imperfections be given the death sentence and the rest of us allowed to live? How have we allowed eugenics to become so commonplace, so clinical, so acceptable; and this so quickly? No wicked Nazis to blame here. Only ourselves.

Congratulations to Poland for protecting unborn sick children. If only we could say the same for ruthless Australia. On one hand we champion the rights of the disabled, and on the other, we try to get rid of any future disabled citizens before they see the light of day.

Ed.

The Tradition of the Nativity Scene

***Admirabile Signum*, on the Meaning and Importance of the Nativity Scene, Pope Francis 2019**

1. The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.

With this Letter, I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares. Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.

Just Getting Older (10) – Understanding

It's not easy to realise that the older I become, the more I become separated from my fellow man. I cannot go out like in earlier days; I am often declared old-fashioned, and losing my marbles a bit. And it is somewhat sad to realise that those who understood me and the ones I understood, I seem to have out-lived.

I ask the Lord at least to help me understand him. He knows me better than all mankind put together, and knows that I am of good will; although sometimes I think I am and have to make right! I would like to continue the remaining days of my life in such a way that I will find my reward in the Lord.

Let me therefore be truthful in small things, patiently waiting, complete trust in our faith, merciful in my judgment, and satisfied with all the Lord gives me; because of his love for me. And when in the end I depart from this world, may the Lord immerse me in his love.

What we do today, will decide what the world will look like tomorrow. Therefore it is reasonable to think that not what you gain financially are your real wages, but what you become.

May the Lord show us beforehand what we have to do, and assist us when we do it. Then, all our prayers and actions will always start and finish with him.

Bert Van Galen, Mowbray, Tasmania

The Poor Help Us

**Pope Francis, Message for World Day of the Poor
15-11-2020**

2. Prayer to God and solidarity with the poor and suffering are inseparable. In order to perform an act of worship acceptable to the Lord, we have to recognize that each person, even the poorest and most contemptible, is made in the image of God. From this awareness comes the gift of God's blessing, drawn by the generosity we show to the poor. Time devoted to prayer can never become an alibi for neglecting our neighbour in need. In fact the very opposite is true: the Lord's blessing descends upon us and prayer attains its goal when accompanied by service to the poor. ...

3. Keeping our gaze fixed on the poor is difficult, but more necessary than ever if we are to give proper direction to our personal life and the life of society. It is not a matter of fine words but of a concrete commitment inspired by divine charity. Each year, on the World Day of the Poor, I reiterate this basic truth in the life of the Church, for the poor are and always will be with us to help us welcome Christ's presence into our daily lives.

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"Every Mass heard with devotion produces in our souls marvellous effects, abundant spiritual and material graces which we, ourselves, do not know." – **St Pio of Pietrelcina**

The Poorest of the Poor

From the book *Mother Teresa of Calcutta: A Personal Portrait* by Fr Leo Maasburg, Ignatius Press (Ch 5)

In order to correctly understand the importance of Mother Teresa's charism, her extraordinary spiritual gift, we need to bear in mind that her vocation was not directed toward the poor in general, but rather "to the poorest of the poor", those who could not help themselves and had no one to take care of them.

Mother Teresa was certainly not a guru who expected everybody to imitate her; she had a great respect for other vocations. "If you are called to educate young people, then that is your vocation. That is what God wants from you." And I often heard her say this simple sentence: "What you do, I cannot do. What I do, you cannot do. But together we can do something beautiful for God."

Moreover, Mother Teresa saw poverty neither as an ideal in itself nor as a divinely ordained destiny. "God did not create poverty. We created poverty because we do not share with one another."

During my first encounters with Mother Teresa, her openness, her insistence on immediately inviting the poor into a newly opened house – indeed, she almost forced them to come in – struck me as somewhat worrying. Wherever she opened a new house, all the poor people in the neighbourhood were invited to the first Holy Mass. Mother Teresa wanted it that way. Looking back, I understand that it was Jesus Whom she wanted to have there, both in the form of the Eucharist and in the poor.

Divine Providence

From the dialogue On Divine Providence by Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor

The eternal Father, indescribably kind and tender, turned his eye to this soul and spoke to her thus:

'O dearest daughter, I have determined to show my mercy and loving kindness to the world, and I choose to provide for mankind all that is good. But man, ignorant, turns into a death-giving thing what I gave in order to give him life. Not only ignorant, but cruel: cruel to himself. But still I go on providing. For this reason I want you to know: whatever I give to man, I do it out of my great providence.

'So it was that when, by my providence, I created man, I looked into myself and fell in love with the beauty of the creature I had made – for it had pleased me, in my providence, to create man in my own image and likeness.

'Moreover, I gave man memory, to be able to remember the good things I had done for him and to be able to share in my own power, the power of the eternal Father.

'Moreover, I gave man intellect, so that, seeing the wisdom of my Son, he could recognise and understand my own will; for I am the giver of all graces and I give them with a burning fatherly love.

'Moreover, I gave man the desire to love, sharing in the tenderness of the Holy Spirit, so that he might love the things that his intellect had understood and seen.

'But my kind providence did all this solely that man might be able to understand me and enjoy me, rejoicing in my vision for all eternity. And as I have told you elsewhere, the disobedience of your first parent Adam closed heaven to you – and from that disobedience came all evil through the whole world.

'To relieve man of the death that his own disobedience had brought, I tenderly and providently gave you my only-begotten Son to heal you and bring satisfaction for your needs. I gave him the task of being supremely obedient, to free the human race of the poison that your first parent's disobedience had spread throughout the world. Falling in love, as it were, with his task, and truly obedient, he hurried to a shameful death on the most holy Cross. By his most holy death he gave you life: not human life this time, but with the strength of his divinity.'

Office of Readings, Saturday Week 30 Ordinary Time

Sincerity Doesn't Replace Truth

Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n.32

Certain currents of modern thought have gone so far as to *exalt freedom to such an extent that it becomes an absolute, which would then be the source of values*. This is the direction taken by doctrines which have lost the sense of the transcendent or which are explicitly atheist. The individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgment which hands down categorical and infallible decisions about good and evil. To the affirmation that one has a duty to follow one's conscience is unduly added the affirmation that one's moral judgment is true merely by the fact that it has its origin in the conscience. But in this way the inescapable claims of truth disappear, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and "being at peace with oneself", so much so that some have come to adopt a radically subjectivistic conception of moral judgment.

As is immediately evident, *the crisis of truth* is not unconnected with this development. Once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason, is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes. Conscience is no longer considered in its primordial reality as an act of a person's intelligence, the function of which is to apply the universal knowledge of the good in a specific situation and thus to express a judgment about the right conduct to be chosen here and now. Instead, there is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly. Such an outlook is quite congenial to an individualist ethic, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth, different from the truth of others. Taken to its extreme consequences, this individualism leads to a denial of the very idea of human nature.

Visiting Graves

Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 03-11-2012

When we step into the corridors of the catacombs in Rome – as in those cemeteries in our cities and in our towns – it is as though we were crossing an immaterial threshold and entering into communication with those who guard their past, made of joy and sorrow, of loss and of hope there. This happens because death concerns man today just as it did then; and even if many things of the past have become estranged to us, death remains the same.

In the face of this reality, the human being of every age searches for a glimmer of light that brings hope, that still speaks of life, and visiting graves also expresses this desire.

But how should we Christians respond to the question of death? We respond with faith in God, with a gaze of firm hope founded on the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, death opens to life, to eternal life, which is not an infinite duplicate of the present time, but something completely new. Faith tells us that the true immortality for which we hope is not an idea, a concept, but a relationship of full communion with the living God: it is resting in his hands, in his love, and becoming in him one with all the brothers and sisters that he has created and redeemed, with all Creation. Our hope, then, lies in the love of God that shines resplendent from the Cross of Christ who lets Jesus' words to the good thief: "Today you will be with me in Paradise" resound in our heart. This is life in its fullness: life in God; a life of which we now have only a glimpse as one sees blue sky through fog.

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Loving God and Neighbour

Pope Francis, Angelus Address, 25-10-2020

In today's Gospel passage (cf. Mt 22:34-40), a doctor of the Law asks Jesus "which is the great commandment", that is, the principal commandment of all divine Law. Jesus simply answers: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind". And he immediately adds: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". ...

Jesus concludes his response with these words: "On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets". This means that all the precepts the Lord has given to his people must be related to love of God and neighbour. ...

The Apostle John writes: "he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1Jn 4:20). Thus, we see the unity of these two commandments. ...

This is the test: if I say "I love God" and do not love my neighbour, it does not work. The verification that I love God is that I love my neighbour. As long as there is a brother or sister to whom we close our hearts, we will still be far from being disciples as Jesus asks us. But his divine mercy does not allow us to be discouraged but rather calls us to begin anew each day to live the Gospel consistently.

May the intercession of Mary Most Holy open our hearts to welcome the "great commandment", the twofold commandment of love, which contains all of God's Law and on which our salvation depends.

Zenit.org 25-10-2020

A Million Children Praying the Rosary

An update on the Rosary campaign mentioned in October ITD (p.11), "A million children praying the Rosary":

Responding to the appeal by Pope Francis, inviting all children to join in this initiative, youngsters from no fewer than 136 different countries and on every continent took part in the most recent annual event of "A million children praying the Rosary", sponsored by...Aid to the Church in Need (ACN International) which took place on 18 and 19 October this year. "This year's involvement marks a historic record, ever since the beginning of the initiative in 2005", stated Father Martin Barta, the spiritual assistant to ACN International.

According to information received by ACN, Poland and Mexico were the two countries in which the response to the initiative was the most widespread. They were followed by Slovakia, India, and the Philippines. ... "The online registration system set up to enable families and groups to register broke down by 509,771 participants. But we also know of thousands of people who were unable to register with the website because the page was subjected to a cyber-attack just two days before the event", Maria Lozano, Head of Press and Communications at ACN International, explained. ...

Zenit.org 29-10-2020

Looking for Help

Some time ago I asked if you knew of a traditional holy priest who was in love with Jesus and Mary, so that I could receive direction for my vocation questions. You gave me the name and contact number of a priest in Queensland and I spoke to him once or twice.

In recent months I have not been able to reach him on the phone number I was given so wonder if he is still there. If you know of anyone else I would be grateful if you could let me know. It is really very important for me as I have spent about 20 years seeking this without any consistency and I feel that the search is even more urgent now.

I do thank you for your publication but if you need to publish my request I would not want to be identified. I don't expect to find someone close at hand and presume it would be phone contact.

Name and address supplied

Please contact ITD if you know of any priest willing to assist this reader and I will forward details to her. - Ed.

The Joy of Living

Pope Francis, for World Day of the Poor 15-11-2020

10. "In everything you do, remember your end". These are the final words of this chapter of the book of Sirach. They can be understood in two ways. First, our lives will sooner or later come to an end. Remembering our common destiny can help lead to a life of concern for those poorer than ourselves or lacking the opportunities that were ours. But second, there is also an end or goal towards which each of us is tending. And this means that our lives are a project and a process. The "end" of all our actions can only be love. This is the ultimate goal of our journey, and nothing should distract us from it. This love is one of sharing, dedication and service, born of the realization that we were first loved and awakened to love. We see this in the way children greet their mother's smile and feel loved simply by virtue of being alive. Even a smile that we can share with the poor is a source of love and a way of spreading love. An outstretched hand, then, can always be enriched by the smile of those who quietly and unassumingly offer to help, inspired only by the joy of living as one of Christ's disciples.

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Catholic Stats

Fides News Service, 18-10-2020; Statistics from the Church's Book of Statistics, as of 31-12-2018

World Population: 7,496,394,000
Catholics in the world: 1,328,993,000
World percentage of Catholics: 17.73%
Bishops: 5,377
Priests: 414,065
Permanent Deacons: 47,504
Men religious: 50,941
Women religious: 641,661
Students in Catholic education (infant to university): 67,655,314
Hospitals: 5,192
Homes for the elderly, ill or disabled: 15,423
Marriage counselling centres: 12,515
Leprosy centres: 577
Orphanages: 9,295
Catholics in Oceania: 10,821,000
Oceania percentage of Catholics: 26.34%
Oceania Catholics of world Catholics: 0.81%

Treat Us the Same

Report by Nicholas Wolfram Smith, from Catholic San Francisco, in Zenit 21-09-2020

After Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone [San Francisco] criticized the restrictions on Mass in a Washington Post editorial, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said "With all due respect to my archbishop, I think we should follow science on this." Pelosi said she misses going to Mass regularly but said attendance should be "scientifically safe, rather than jeopardizing people's health if they want to go to church," she said.

In a response published Sept. 19, Archbishop Cordileone pointed to a recent article by three doctors arguing that church services that follow public health guidelines are not a greater risk for COVID-19 outbreaks than other similar activities.

"There is no science that says only one person should be allowed to pray in churches such as the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption, which seats 2,500 people. There's only one explanation for such a rule: a dislike of the Catholic Church."

With museums being allowed to open with 25% of capacity, he said, "Why won't the City and County of San Francisco treat Catholics – at a minimum – the same?"

Knowing Christ Liturgically

I have previously written (September ITD, p. 5) that there are two ways of learning to know Christ, one theoretically and superficially through Scripture alone, that is from the outside; and the other from the inside. To know the Lord from the inside means knowing by encountering the living Paschal Christ liturgically, that is, sacramentally. Because fundamentally, the Church's liturgy is the primary means of entering into the mystery of Christ. It alone gives what it teaches, because the Master, the one who is our prayer, our worship so to speak, brings about what he is teaching us.

In the sacraments, of which the Mass is the crowning jewel, Christ as the living head of the Church prays for us and prays in us, and he it is to whom we all pray as our God.

It is here at the altar, that we learn how to present and unite ourselves as offerers and offered, becoming one with Christ our eternal high priest in thanksgiving for the Father's goodness towards us. United with the self-offering of Christ, we learn how to become a living sacrifice in reparation for our sins and offenses and how to overcome temptation and suffer the burden of wrongdoing redemptively. It is here that we learn how to live and die daily to ourselves, in love with the Father's will, and how to make the Paschal mystery functional and operative in our lives. It is here that we encounter Christ the eternal high priest in his prayer, in his saving mystery, as the victim and the altar, which really is the most intimate and sacred way of knowing him.

Through the liturgy we learn how to become a liturgical people, accustomed to the divine life and nature we received in baptism, and how to be a true son and daughter of the Father.

Through the Incarnation, God has ordained and willed that the Catholic Church alone should be the sacred place or space so to speak, to worship him in spirit and truth, and to encounter him in body, blood, soul and divinity, and to unite and commune with him personally.

Finally, to really and truly get to know Christ in his mystery from the inside, one must be a practising Catholic in pursuit of holiness, whose life is anchored in the liturgical life of the Church. For sacraments are crucial not only for learning to know Christ from the inside, but for encountering God, and participating in his inner life and love. And if you do not have a thorough grasp of them and their effects, then you will never have proper understanding of the true nature of the Catholic Church and Christianity.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell, Victoria

The Psalms

Pope Francis, General Audience 14-10-2020

In the Psalms, we find all human sentiments: the joys, the sorrows, the doubts, the hopes, the bitterness that colour our lives. The Catechism affirms that every Psalm "possesses such direct simplicity that it can be prayed in truth by men of all times and conditions" (CCC, 2588). As we read and reread the Psalms, we learn the language of prayer. God the Father, indeed, with His Spirit, inspired them in the heart of King David and others who prayed, in order to teach every man and woman how to praise Him, how to thank Him and to supplicate; how to invoke Him in joy and in suffering, and how to recount the wonders of His works and of His Law. In short, the Psalms are the word of God that we human beings use to speak with Him.

Zenit.org 14-10-2020

Angels

Catechism of the Catholic Church

328 The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.

329 St. Augustine says: "'Angel' is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is 'spirit'; if you seek the name of their office, it is 'angel': from what they are, 'spirit', from what they do, 'angel.'" With their whole beings the angels are *servants* and messengers of God. ...

330 As purely *spiritual* creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendour of their glory bears witness.

A Parable

I came across this story in some old papers from my Student Catholic Society days at university. Author unknown. - Ed.

Once upon a time, twin boys were conceived in the same womb. Seconds, minutes, hours passed as the two dormant lives developed. The spark of life glowed until it fanned fire with the formation of their embryonic brains. With their simple brains came feeling, and with feeling, perception; a perception of surroundings, of each other, of self.

When they perceived the life of each other and their own life, they knew that life was good, and they laughed and rejoiced: the one saying, "Lucky are we to have been conceived, and to have this world!" and the other chiming, "Blessed be the Mother who gave us this life and each other!"

Each budded and grew arms and fingers, lean legs and stubby toes. They stretched their lungs, churned and turned in their new-found world. They explored their world and in it found the life cord which gave them life from the precious Mother's blood. So they sang, "How great is the love of the Mother that she shares all she has with us!" And they were pleased and satisfied with their lot.

Weeks passed into months, and with the advent of each new month, they noticed a change in each other and each began to see change in himself. "We are changing," said the one, "What can it mean?"

"It means," replied the other, "that we are drawing near to birth." An unsettling chill crept over the two, and they both feared for they knew that birth meant leaving all their world behind.

Said the one, "Were it up to me, I would live here forever." "We must be born," said the other. "It has happened to all others who were here." For indeed there was evidence of life there before, as the Mother had borne others. "But mightn't there be a life after birth?"

"How can there be life after birth?" cried the one, "Do we not shed our life cord and also the blood tissues? And have you ever talked to one who has been born? Has anyone ever re-entered the womb after birth? NO!" He fell into despair, and in his despair he moaned, "If the purpose of conception and all our growth is that it be ended in birth, then truly our life is absurd." Resigned to despair, the one stabbed the darkness with his unseeing eyes and as he clutched his precious life cord to his chest said, "If this is so, and life is absurd, then there really can be no Mother."

"But there is a Mother," protested the other. "Who else gave us nourishment and our world?"

"We get our own nourishment and our world has always been here. And if there is a Mother, where is she? Have you ever seen her? Does she ever talk to you? NO! We invented the Mother because it satisfied a need in us. It made us feel secure and happy."

Thus while one raved and despaired, the other resigned himself to birth, and placed his trust in the hands of the Mother. Hours ached into days, and days fell into weeks. And it came time. Both knew their birth was at hand, and both feared what they did not know. As the one was the first to be conceived, so he was the first to be born, the other following after.

They cried as they were born into the light. And coughed out fluid and gasped the dry air. And when they were sure they had been born, they opened their eyes seeing for the first time, and found themselves cradled in the warm love of the Mother! They lay open-mouthed, awe-struck before that beauty and truth they could not have hoped to have known.

The Correct Perspective on Life

Pope John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly, 1999 (n.10)

There is an urgent need to recover a correct perspective on life as a whole. The correct perspective is that of eternity, for which life at every phase is a meaningful preparation. Old age too has a proper role to play in this process of gradual maturing along the path to eternity. And this process of maturing cannot but benefit the larger society of which the elderly person is a part.

Fearful Times

I have great devotion to Our Lady and have read her comments at Fatima, Akita etc. where our heavenly Mother has told us to prepare for trouble if we don't amend our ways.

I don't want to panic, but how can we ignore the abominations that are being perpetrated in our holy church?

Look at the cardinals and bishops who publicly fight with each other. They don't give a damn about the scandal they give.

Most countries in the world are spoiling for a fight. We do not love one another.

God is publicly rejected and mocked as is evidenced by the number of churches and statues that have been desecrated.

Our leaders are as weak as dishwater.

Millions believe that Nietzsche spoke the truth when he claimed that "God is dead".

The Devil is having a field day. He has divided the Church. Evil has run wild.

Our Blessed Lady prophesised that these calamities would befall the Church. Our only hope is that Christ promised He would always be with us – but He never said how large His church would be. It looks as if it will only be a remnant.

May I take the opportunity to mention to your readers for us all to go to confession before Christmas.

We live in fearful times.

Back in the time of Moses everyone accepted it as fact Almighty God sent ten plagues. Why does no one think that Covid-19 might be our Creator speaking to us. Is Noah building his ark? Have we noticed? Do we care?

Pat Ryan, London, United Kingdom

A Cry for Help

Pope Francis, General Audience 14-10-2020

The existence of each human being is but a breath, his or her story is fleeting, but the prayerful know that they are precious in the eyes of God, and so *it makes sense to cry out*. And this is important. When we pray, we do so because we know we are precious in God's eyes. It is the grace of the Holy Spirit that, from within, inspires in us this awareness: of being precious in the eyes of God. And this is why we are moved to pray. ...

Everyone suffers in this world: whether they believe in God or reject Him. But in the Psalter, pain becomes a *relationship*, rapport: a cry for help waiting to intercept a listening ear. It cannot remain meaningless, without purpose. Even the pains we suffer cannot be merely specific cases of a universal law: they are always "my" tears. Think about this: tears are not universal, they are "my" tears. Everyone has their own. "My" tears and "my" pain drive me to go ahead in prayer. They are "my" tears, that no one has ever shed before me. Yes, they have wept, many. But "my" tears are mine, "My" pain is my own, "my" suffering is my own. ...

In the Psalms, the believer finds an answer. He knows that even if all human doors were barred, God's door is open. Even if the whole world had issued a verdict of condemnation, there is salvation in God.

"The Lord listens": sometimes in prayer it is enough to know this. Problems are not always solved. Those who pray are not deluded: they know that many questions of life down here remain unresolved, with no way out; suffering will accompany us and, after one battle, others will await us. But if we are listened to, everything becomes more bearable. ...

Zenit.org 14-10-2020

Compassionate Euthanasia

***Samaritanus Bonus*, Letter on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life, Part IV**

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

A second obstacle that obscures our recognition of the sacredness of human life is a false understanding of "compassion". In the face of seemingly "unbearable" suffering, the termination of a patient's life is justified in the name of "compassion". This so-called "compassionate" euthanasia holds that it is better to die than to suffer, and that it would be compassionate to help a patient to die by means of euthanasia or assisted suicide. In reality, human compassion consists not in causing death, but in embracing the sick, in supporting them in their difficulties, in offering them affection, attention, and the means to alleviate the suffering.

The Origins of the Nativity Scene

Admirabile Signum, on the Meaning and Importance of the Nativity Scene, Pope Francis 2019

2. The origin of the Christmas crèche is found above all in certain details of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, as related in the Gospels. The evangelist Luke says simply that Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn". ...

Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as "the bread come down from heaven". Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: "Laid in a manger, he became our food". Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus' life and brings them close to our own daily lives.

But let us go back to the origins of the Christmas crèche so familiar to us. We need to imagine ourselves in the little Italian town of Greccio, near Rieti. Saint Francis stopped there, most likely on his way back from Rome where on 29 November 1223 he had received the confirmation of his Rule from Pope Honorius III. Francis had earlier visited the Holy Land, and the caves in Greccio reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem. It may also be that the "Poor Man of Assisi" had been struck by the mosaics in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major depicting the birth of Jesus, close to the place where, according to an ancient tradition, the wooden panels of the manger are preserved.

The *Franciscan Sources* describe in detail what then took place in Greccio. Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire "to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay". At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked. On 25 December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present.

This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.

Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of Saint Francis, notes that this simple and moving scene was accompanied by the gift of a marvellous vision: one of those present saw the Baby Jesus himself lying in the manger. From the nativity scene of that Christmas in 1223, "everyone went home with joy".

3. With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization. His teaching touched the hearts of Christians and continues today to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith.

Called to Render Account

Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus Address, 27-11-2011

The liturgical year begins with the period of Advent: a wonderful time in which people's hearts are reawakened to the expectation of Christ's return and to the memory of His first coming, when He divested Himself of His divine glory to assume our mortal flesh.

"Stay awake!" This is Jesus' call in today's Gospel. He directs it not only to his disciples, but to everyone: "Stay awake! It is a timely reminder that life has not only an earthly dimension, but is projected, "beyond," like a small seedling whose shoots open from the earth towards heaven. A small thinking seedling, man, gifted with freedom and responsibility, for which each one of us will be called to render account of how he has lived, how he has used his abilities: if he has kept them for himself or he has made them bear fruit for the good of others.

Zenit.org 28-11-2011

Hours of Eucharistic Adoration

in Gippsland

Bass	Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Bairnsdale	1 st Friday after 9.10am Mass
Heyfield	1 st Fridays 10am – 4.30pm
Cowwarr Ord.	Wednesday (Mass 10am) – 11am Thursday 6-7pm; 1 st Friday (Mass 6pm) – 9pm 1 st Saturday (Mass 10am) – 11am
Churchill	Saturday (9.30am Mass) – 11am
Cranbourne	Fri & Sat in church: (9.30 Mass) – 11am Adoration Chapel accessible 24 hours by PIN available at parish office.
Drouin	Thursday 10am – 11am 1 st Friday 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Dec. on)
Lakes Entrance	Friday 9.30am – 11am
Maffra	Wednesday (5pm Mass) – 6pm
Moe	Wednesday (9am Mass) – 10.30am
Morwell	Friday 2pm - 6pm (Sacred Heart Church)
Orbost	Wednesday (9.30am Mass) – 11am
Rosedale	First Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Sale	Friday 11.30am–12pm; 1 st Friday till 4pm
Trafalgar	Wed & 1st Sat: (9.30am Mass) – 10.45am
Traralgon	Wednesday 11am – 12 noon
Warragul	Saturday 10am – 11am 1 st Fri 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Jan. on)
Wonthaggi	1 st Friday 7pm – 8pm

Those Who Have Gone Before

Pope Francis, 04-08-2016

We are never alone in living the faith; we do so in the company of all the saints and of our loved ones who practised the faith with joyful simplicity and bore witness to it by their lives.

Pray for Them

Please remember to pray for all readers of ITD who have died. Many would have had children and grandchildren who no longer practise the Faith and they would have worried about who would pray for their souls after their death. Pray for them, and their families.

Eternal rest
grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light
shine upon them.
May they rest in peace.
Amen.

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The purpose of ITD is to provide a forum for those who:

- no longer have a voice in Catholic Life, and other diocesan newspapers,
- wish to understand and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church,
- wish to support and defend those who are unjustly treated by Church bureaucrats and organisations,
- wish to campaign for the renewal of our Catholic schools,
- wish to promote Eucharistic adoration in all parishes,
- wish to have a means of support and contact for one another in remaining true to our Catholic faith.

Letters to the Editor:

Readers are encouraged to contribute letters. There is no guarantee that every letter will be published, and we reserve the right to edit letters. Name and contact details must accompany letters, however, if there is sufficient reason, anonymity will be preserved when publishing. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of ITD.

Mary, our Mother

And Mother of the Redeemer,
Gate of heaven and Star of the sea,
Come to the aid of your people,
Who have sinned, yet also yearn to rise again!
Come to the Church's aid,
Enlighten your devoted children,
Strengthen the faithful throughout the world,
Let those who have drifted hear your call,
And may they who live as prisoners of evil
Be converted!

Pope John Paul II